Forgotten Farm Workers: Contemporary Farm Labour and Sustainability in the South West of England

Volume 1 of 1

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

Signature: …….

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Abstract

The mass decline in agricultural labour in Britain since the industrial revolution has, ultimately, led to it becoming a significant 'blind spot' in the agricultural research agenda. Data regarding those who actively work at the 'frontline' of agriculture, and how they interrelate with other agents in their network to achieve multiple national and global agendas, is minimal.

This thesis contributes and develops a comprehensive body of knowledge concerning the composition of labour on farms in the South West of England, as well as identifying and exploring contemporary relationships between farm labour contributors, the community; and the land, through the examination of the lived experience of different contributors to agricultural labour. These changes are considered under the lens of agriculture's ever-encroaching challenges of productivity, labour skills shortages and sustainable intensification.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, incorporating a postal survey of 1251 farms, as well as 45 semi-structured interviews with farm labour contributors via a case study approach. Quantitative data provides a useful picture of those contributing to labour on farms in the South West of England, and brings attention to associated labour issues experienced by farmers. Qualitative data fleshes out these results with the guidance of Actor Network Theory. The concept of the lifescape is utilised to achieve this most pictorially while principles from the Human Capability Framework are applied to weaknesses in network chains that were revealed during the research process.

Results reveal how new worker profiles have arisen from the increasingly flexible labour market, with contractors exposed as playing a progressively more crucial role to the survival of the industry. Due to an impending labour crisis, rapid technological development, and disparities in knowledge between farmers and other labour contributors, relationships of independence and interdependence between the various cohorts were discovered.

Multiple actors within the lifescape of the farm labour contributor mean that clear distinctions cannot be made between farm, land, nature and community, with no single element more important than the other in the playing out of behaviours. Similarly, that same array of actors is seen to contribute significantly to the capacities, opportunities and freedoms available to farm labour contributors, and where a match between the two fails, substantial issues can be seen to arise.

The research makes a valuable contribution to rural sociology through understanding the lifescape of the farm worker from the ground up. Overall, it addresses the importance of incorporating farm workers and contributors into the agricultural and more specifically, the sustainable intensification research agenda, particularly emphasising the importance of agricultural research and policy-making parameters being *inclusive* of all individuals who actively contribute to the land, rather than *exclusive.*

‘If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.’

— J.R.R. Tolkien

In memory of Ben Rodwell and Vicky Welch

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List of Acronyms

AKST	Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology
ANT	Actor Network Theory
AWB	Agricultural Wages Board
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CWAEC	County War Agricultural Executive Committees
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ECALSU	Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Smallholders' Union
EU	European Union
FBS	Farm Business Survey
FLC	Farm Labour Contributor
HCF	Human Capability Framework
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IMS	Institute of Manpower Studies
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NALU	National Agricultural Labourers' Union
NAUW	National Union of Agricultural Workers
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUAAW	National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
O*NET	Occupational Information Network
SAWS	Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
WWOOF	Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms
YFC	Young Farmers Club

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Sustainable Intensification: An Introduction

> *'Sustainability […] ought to mean more than just agricultural activities that are environmentally neutral or positive. It ought to imply the capacity for activities to spread beyond the project in both space and time. A 'successful' project that leads to improvements that neither persist nor spread beyond the project's boundary should not be considered sustainable'* (Pretty 1997: 251)

Agriculture in Britain faces a number of long-term challenges as the global marketplace continues to expand, world population grows, and an increasing pressure is exerted upon natural resources (Defra 2008). It needs to ensure its place as a competitive, resilient, and environmentally sustainable industry both locally and in the global arena. With a potential role to play not only towards the food security of Britain, but also that of the rest of the world, the agricultural industry must carve out a route which enables sufficient food production, whilst simultaneously considering the environmental, social, political, economic and health-related impacts of that production. Sustainable intensification has been proposed as the panacea for such an invariably dichotomous situation; a measure which 'seeks to achieve food security through an increase in production, while minimising negative environmental impacts and avoiding the expansion of land use for cultivation' (Loos et al 2014: 356). Typically considered in conjunction with the food security agenda, surprisingly few proponents of sustainable intensification fully explore the realms of sustainability in a holistic manner, despite there being 'broad agreement that sustainability should encompass 'not only environmental integrity but also human well-being' (ibid: 356). By deflecting attention away from the agents who directly affect the uptake and implementation of sustainable techniques, onto the scientists and their creations of 'novel' knowledge (Kuyper and Struick 2014), there is a danger that the 'intensification' element might overtake its 'sustainable' counterpart as a result of such preclusion.

Developed originally in the 1990s, the term sustainable intensification was coined in response to challenges to food production faced by developing countries; a new paradigm for development (Pretty 1997). Since then, the oxymoronic quality of such a solution has stimulated debate, innovation and criticism, while at the same time gradually dragging the spotlight away from a focus on bottom-up techniques emphasising 'local knowledge and the development of adaptive agricultural methods suited to local conditions' to rather emphasise 'efficiency enhancement' on either a national or global scale (Loos et al 2014: 357). What has come to mean sustainable intensification, or 'conventional' intensification, in contemporary terms, is now

synonymous with global practices implementing advanced technologies delivered from non-rural epicentres, ensuring labour extensive practices with high labour productivity (Kuyper and Struick 2014). Ecological intensification has been bandied as a more efficient term, emphasising regional differences, local knowledge 'as source of inspiration' (ibid: 75), and a more labour-intensive approach. Although neither of these typologies is binding nor mutually exclusive, each has their own social and political implications.

1.0.1 The Dichotomy of Sustainable Intensification

Loos et al (2014) argue the misleading nature of the term 'sustainable intensification', stating that 'it inadequately addresses the central tenants of sustainability' (ibid: 56) by overly focussing on the minimisation of impact to the environment, while Kuyper and Struik (2014) suggest that both the terms 'sustainable' and 'intensification' are, in themselves, ambiguous and that current understandings and applications of the combined terms strip off 'their social and political content' (ibid: 74). They identify how, despite the similarities between the goals of ecological intensification, a term coined in 1986 by Egger (1986), and sustainable intensification, radical disparities exist whereby the former seeks to mimic nature and reduce the external inputs, such as fertilisers, pesticides and fuels that sustainable intensification in its current form has come to rely on in order to produce ever increasing yields. Garibaldi et al (2017) point out that this graduation of sustainable intensification from agroforestry conservation agriculture and biological pest control, to dependencies on precision agriculture, fertilisers, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has led 'to criticism that the concept no longer promotes social equity' (ibid: 69).

Despite controversies surrounding definitions of the term sustainable intensification (Cook et al 2015) and the specific nature of the problems it seeks to address, related research and development is in full swing (Bura and te Boekhorst 2016), yet the limited sociological inquiry relating to sustainable intensification that presently exists appears to stop at the farmer's door.

The purpose of this thesis is neither to debate the definition of sustainable intensification nor examine its efficacy as a measure. Instead, it seeks to zoom out from global scale considerations, and rather focus in to examine 'the interconnection between dimensions' with an emphasis on local connections (Kuyper and Struick 2014: 77).

1.0.2 The Farm Worker as a Key Actor in the Sustainable Intensification Nexus

'An actor is nothing without a network' (Inkpen, Collier and Riley 2007: 536)

Myriad studies exist concerning agricultural management (Mueller et al 2012) and soil protection practices (Schulte et al 2014). Often approached from a technical perspective, policies and scientific developments are prompted as management solutions in the pursuit of sustainable intensification. Fewer studies have captured the actuality that the implementation of these practices is reliant on the farmer, not recognising that 'ultimately the farmers' actions will determine the state of the soil' (Ingram et al 2010: 51). Despite some recognition in the past that the structure of labour organisation has transformed significantly within the average farm holding (Ball 1987b), causing important transitions concerning front-line workers who directly work the land and the soil, there currently exists little evidence as to how new interconnections formed between farmers, farm workers, agricultural contractors and other related agents might affect knowledge exchange, decision-making processes, motivation in the workplace and frontline activity on British soils. Although the traditional farm worker and the agricultural contractor are two of the most significant actors in the life-world of the farmer, their role within the sustainable intensification agenda has been almost completely ignored. The assumption that farm labour contributors who are not the farmer, lack agency in the workplace; that they simply act on the command, knowledge and direction of the farmer, is based on an archaic perception of the British farm worker as deferential (Newby 1977), powerless (Danziger 1988), unskilled, or lacking ownership. The rapidity of technological development and transformations in types of knowledge mean that often farmers might no longer necessarily be the most informed out of the three cohorts.

Changes and developments in agricultural machinery and technology have resulted in some task performances generally receding to fewer days or hours worked (Hunt and Wilson 2015), but it is distracting to perceive labour in terms of worker-hours alone, or to the longevity of a task as attached to the importance of its role, as this is disparate to the actual output of each task. A job performed over less time is still as crucial for both reasons of production and the environment over the course of the rest of the year. It is, therefore, imperative to understand exactly who is carrying out these tasks, as 'different actors in the context of agricultural management will have different perspectives informed by their knowledge, values, interests and experiences' (Ingram et al 2010: 51). According to Bainbridge et al (2000) 'no matter how radically structures and systems are reformed within natural resource management bureaucracies, if environmental knowledge and other aspects of organisational culture are left untouched the changes will remain superficial and ultimately without effect' (ibid: 19).

Actors with whom the farmer interacts may have an influence over knowledge, innovation and uptake of non-traditional farming practices, while at the same time, a risk also exists that some 'marginalised, traditional lay knowledge is, for certain types of production, outdated' (Fonte 2008: 214).

All actors who contribute to frontline activity on the land, should then, be welcomed into the sustainability debate, to prevent both efficient production as well as environmentally-friendly methods of farming from being blocked at the crucial interface between worker and land. There exists the potential for a lack of information, misinformed advice, or gaps in awareness, to act as constraints in the adoption of new technologies, systems or practices and therefore it is essential that all farm labour contributors are not only considered in the development of frameworks for the implementation of sustainably intensive farming techniques but that they are brought into discussions where currently only the farmer has any domain within the greater network of actors debating the sustainable intensification paradigm.

The link between the individual working the land and the advancement of the sustainable intensification paradigm in agriculture has, globally, tended to focus only on developing countries and the effects of toxic substances on the worker (Jepson et al 2014) or sustainability and social justice (Amekawa 2011). These foci lend themselves to an interpretation of the worker as a passive participant in the agenda, rather than an active participant with power and agency. Little consideration has been afforded to the active role played by each farm labour contributor in the possible achievement of sustainable intensification in this country, despite their being responsible for the direct implementation of methods, practices and policies that endeavour to attain this goal, nor whether the industry has sufficient access to actors with the right capabilities to actually do so. Wendell Berry believes that 'people cannot be adequately motivated to care for the land by general principles or by incentives that are merely economic' (Berry 1991:390). The work of the farm labour contributor always stood apart from the 'sociological truism that industrialisation created two distinct spheres of life – home and work', as weather, seasons and the unpredictability of the natural world, ensured that lives and work continued to be knitted together whilst other industries witnessed a separation between the two (Felstead et al 2005: 3). Is this still the case?

The role of the farm worker within the sustainable intensification paradigm, therefore, belongs to a much wider debate regarding sustainability. Attitudes to sustainable intensification are important, and the conception of sustainability is crucial to these attitudes. So, is it really as simple as merely production and environment, or is this part of a greater, inextricable web of actors in a sustainability agenda?

1.03 Contemporary Farm Workers and the 'New Worker Profile'

> *'A massive revolution is taking place in U.K. agriculture […] whereby the process of farming is substantially severing its links with the permanent workforce' (Cherrington 1981)*

The act of working on the land has been examined by numerous commentators, linking it to job satisfaction and motivation (Winter 1978), consubstantiality (the idea of the worker and the land being of the same essence) (Gray 2000), relationship with the landscape (Mitchell 1996) and social relations (Newby 1977). Several key, seminal works contribute to the body of knowledge encompassing farm labour, most notably Newby's *The Deferential Worker* (1977), as well as Armstrong's *Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History: 1770-1980* (1988) and Danziger's *Political Powerlessness. Agricultural workers in post-war England* (1988). However, significant changes have occurred since the publication of these works and the perspective and situation of some of the key actors contributing to agricultural labour in Britain have, in recent literature, been largely overlooked. Of equal importance, statistical analyses of agriculture in Britain largely ignore the existence and variability of the flexible labour market that has become increasingly prevalent in the farming world in Britain today.

The fate of the agricultural worker prior to the twenty-first century has proven to be a somewhat undulating path with regards to pay, standard of living, progression in the labour movement and social standing. Newby's seminal work, *The Deferential Worker*, arose from his observation that the decline in agricultural workers was matched by a decline in interest by labour historians in those workers. Since publication, few works have been produced dealing with farm labour in Britain in the late twentieth century or even early twenty-first century and those that have more often than not tend to focus on either the migrant worker (Geddes and Scott 2011) or the farmer and farming families (Gasson and Errington 1993). Very little literature exists on the small core of permanent farm staff, and even less on external actors who work on British farms who are neither the principal farmer on the land, nor employed as 'traditional' farm workers or seasonal workers. This ignores the fact that 'while the number of people directly employed as farmers or farmworkers has fallen drastically in the years since the war […] the number indirectly employed by agriculture has increased just as drastically' (Body 1983 :42). Equally of interest is the move from the earlier model of specialised workers, to more generalised work, such as that demonstrated by farm workers in Newby's era, and subsequently back to a more specialised division of labour; a move from heterogeneity in tasks, to an era of homogeneity, and subsequently returning to heterogeneity in the (re)division of labour. For example, agri-environmental specialists, fencing specialists, agronomists and agricultural contractors now perform at least one

or two tasks that previously might have formed a small part of the working repertoire of the farmer or farm worker. This new division of farm work requires detailed examination with regards to the strengths and weaknesses of the current agricultural labour situation and the implication of what it means for the farming industry now and in the future, in terms of a highly-skilled workforce going forward.

Problems with data

Since data regarding the number of farm workers began to be recorded in the mid-nineteenth century, inaccuracies have repeatedly surfaced. This largely results from the ambiguity of the term 'farm worker', as well as from the mislabelling, underestimation, or omission of various workers in some of the earlier censuses, such as women (Higgs 1987), seasonal labour (Armstrong 1988), farmers and/or their families (Gasson and Errington 1993) and agricultural contractors (Ball 1987a). Ball states that there is 'little supporting empirical evidence on [the] incidence' of contractors in farming (ibid: 482), and although this is dealt with in some detail via later research carried out by Defra (2014b), any data collected is usually examined independently of other forms of farm labour rather than as a proportion of farm labour as a whole. Data collection methods and literature referring to numbers of farm workers have, over the last 200 years, lacked a 'measure', a 'metric', a 'common standard necessary for a synoptic view' (Scott 1998: 24). These snap-shot type recording methods misrepresent seasonal fluctuations that affect staffing requirements over the course of the year (Ball 1987a). For example, the widely referred to Defra Survey of Agriculture and Horticulture only records number of workers on the farm in June, and so is not representative of all workers in agriculture over the course of a year (Precision Prospecting 2005). As a result, accuracy of data concerning labour use in agriculture has been, and still is, significantly limited (Ball 1987b). This research will identify all composites of labour on the agricultural units surveyed, both on and off-farm, in order to establish actual numbers and types of labour working on farms over the duration of the year. For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'farm labour contributor' (FLC) will refer to any person contributing to physical labour on a farm, regardless of whether they are based on or off-farm, and of their status of employment. Categories of workers will be referred to less generically, i.e. as a contractor, seasonal worker, permanent full-time worker etc.

Due to the emphasis of contemporary literature on the farmer, the family farm as a whole, or migrant workers, a substantial gap in knowledge regarding other actors, a version of 'neglected rural others' (Philo 1992: 200) gapes widely within the wider agricultural research agenda; those actors who also provide knowledge and labour input into British farming. Riley and Harvey (2007) concur in a study of the Peak

District, identifying that their employment of participant observation 'gave access to a workforce who, due to their transient and sporadic presence on the farm, would not normally have figured prominently within farm interviews' (ibid: 17). Morris and Evans (2004) further acknowledge that cultural examinations of actors within agriculture tend to focus more on the farmer as the 'principal operator', whilst 'non-family hired workers, contractors, […] shepherds, rare breed keepers and independent women farmers […] remain sorely neglected' (ibid: 104). Charlie Clutterbuck (2013) describes agricultural labour as a 'blind spot' and recognises that 'solutions proffered for food security and sustainability are usually technical-rather than social' (ibid: 166). His concern lies in the neglect of the workforce in rural research and what this might foretell for agriculture in the next twenty years.

1.1 Research Aims

This research focuses on the 'blind spot' of agricultural research; farm labour. It contributes an original analysis of the composition of contemporary farm labour in the South West of England, as a new worker profile emerges, as well as examining social, attitudinal, and behavioural changes that have arisen from transformations in the agricultural labour situation over the last fifty years. It examines the premise that, whilst traditional workers have declined, self-employed contractors and intermittent farm workers are on the increase within UK agriculture. The casualisation of agricultural labour into a more 'flexible' workforce is a largely ignored phenomenon in agricultural research when considered alongside more traditional forms of labour at the micro level, especially in the case of self-employed contractors.

With the future of our soils, water and biodiversity hanging precariously in the balance, as well as the sustainability not only of the environment, but rural communities and the agricultural industry as a whole, the paradigm of sustainable intensification requires more detailed examination than ever. It is essential to recognise exactly who is working the farm and the land today, and consequently, what each of those actor's role is in the labour process, the farm itself and the wider community. Equally, skill, knowledge and worker capabilities, and the opportunities with which they are matched, require further analysis in the face of potential labour shortages. This is important to the sustainability debate because each actor directly working the land arrives with different experiences, skills and attitudes. Conversely, what each actor derives from their work and experience will dictate the sustainability of their roles and place in the industry in the future.

The primary research aim is as follows:

> To understand the role of the principal farm labour cohorts within the sustainable intensification agenda, both as **a resource for labour,** and as **agents of social and cultural capital** within the farming industry.

The key questions postulated by Newby (1977) have been adopted and adapted in order to steer this thesis towards painting an accurate and current picture of the farm labour situation in the South West of England;

1. What is the situation at the site of employment for both workers and employer? (composition, availability, employment relationships)

2. How do all agricultural labour contributors relate to their immediate and wider communities? (lifescape, land, environment, community)

3. What capacities and opportunities exist in the agricultural labour market to ensure that the needs of all actors are met, and therefore ensure industry sustainability into the future? (skills, knowledge, attitudes, technology, capital)

Due to recent studies regarding migrant labour in the British agricultural industry (Geddes and Scott 2011; Rogaly 2008; Cross et al 2008) and because Devon employs fewer migrant workers comparatively than other regions of the UK for the purpose of farming, migrant workers will **not** be the focus of this thesis.

This thesis aims to examine the interface between farmers, farm workers, and contractors, and subsequent interfaces between each of them and other actors within their lifescapes, peeling away standard 'scripts' generalising the dominant role of the farmer to unveil the myriad different relationships that are unfolding in the contemporary landscape. Both the farmer and the 'farm worker' will be given a voice in this study. The intentions for the 'people aspects' of the former and their anticipated staffing needs, arising from the survey data, provides an indicator as to how the composition of labour is likely to develop into the future. And any emergent trends from interviews with and observations of the latter, arising from qualitative data, provides an indicator as to what this might mean more generally for farm workers, agriculture, the environment, the rural community and the implementation of sustainable techniques. An examination of the role of new technologies in agriculture, such as robotic tractors and GPS systems, will play a part in this study, as will the education and skills development associated with these new technologies.

This study makes an original contribution to the understanding of contemporary farm labour contributors and how they interrelate with rural communities, the environment,

and the sustainable intensification agenda. The research sits comfortably within the discipline of rural sociology, an area which Lawrence (1997) argues is 'relevant, applied *and* critical' (ibid: 34 original emphasis) despite the 'danger [that] rural sociology will become [..] the handmaiden to agro-technicians whose ultimate goal is not to understand the causes of social and environmental degradation' (ibid: 31).

Primarily, this study moves away from the current labelling of farm workers as either traditional full-time or part-time hired workers, or seasonal workers, and identifies *all* cohorts who currently contribute to labour on the land, recognising the breadth and role of the flexible labour market in agriculture. The inclusion of these actors within such an empirical study is a response to Riley and Harvey (2007), Morris and Evans (2004) and Clutterbuck (2013), all of whom identified farm workers and/or contractors as ignored but significant actors within agricultural communities.

Various sociological variables are subsequently identified within the lifescape of the farm labour contributor, and critical networks are determined and explored, with the inclusion of both human and non-human entities. Particular emphasis is placed upon relationships between farmers and agricultural contractors due to the complete lack of research examining the dynamic between these two cohorts. This offers not only an original contribution to knowledge in relation to this particular interface, but will also prove useful in future research related to farm labour.

The final contribution recognises the relevance of these networks, which filters through into the subsequent section regarding human capabilities and reveals an impending 'labour crisis' in agriculture in the South West of England. Despite what has been termed as a renaissance in agriculture (Whitehead et al 2012), the shortages in farm labour as discovered by this research demonstrate how this renaissance might not extend far enough, and how, although some cite an increase in farmers being valued (Chiswell 2014), the opposite appears to be true for a career in farming. This research critically considers both the capacities and opportunities belonging to all farm labour contributors and how these ultimately tie in to the sustainable intensification agenda.

Research significance

This study is significant because it will describe three cohorts that have not before been examined together under these terms. Farm labour in the UK remains a little-understood phenomenon. This research intends to create a more in depth understanding of the lived experience of all actors who contribute to labour carried out on the farm using network relationships. As Kingsnorth states, 'if a nation is a relationship between people and place, then a cultural identity that comes from a careful relationship with that place might be a new story worth telling' (ibid: 1).

1.2 Structure of Thesis

Chapters Two and Three outline the key areas of this thesis, incorporating existing literature to support the choice of the aims for an original contribution to knowledge. Chapter Two contextualises the modern farm labour contributor within the wider historical perspective of the traditional farm worker, from the 1850s to the present day. Focus is placed on 'non-seasonal' labour on farms in Britain, and how over time, not only have numbers of traditional farm workers declined, but significant groups have been ignored in statistical data collection, most notably, agricultural contractors.

Chapter Three further explores how some of these 'ignored' groups form part of a flexible labour market in British agriculture, and introduces debates around models and associations with flexible labour. Three cohorts of farm labour contributors are identified for the purpose of the thesis, and the implications of the current labour market model on identification with place, community, the land, and sustainable practice are explored further.

Relevant literature will also be woven through the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Four presents a dual theoretical approach to the thesis. Firstly, justifications for considering data according to Actor Network Theory (ANT) under the *lifescape* model are presented. Subsequently, aspects of the Human Capability Framework, namely *capacities*, *opportunities*, and *matching*, are highlighted as useful tools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current agricultural labour situation.

The methodologies adopted for data collection are summarised in Chapter Five, including a consideration of the applicability of a mixed-methods approach. Firstly, the quantitative method in the form of a postal survey is described, followed by an analysis of the choice of case studies, in the form of semi-structured interviews, for the qualitative element of the data collection. This chapter provides an explanation for the choice of methods, as well as reasons for choosing the South West and more specifically, Devon, for the purpose of the thesis. Ethical issues, positionality and reflexivity are considered as a part of this chapter.

Chapter Six draws on quantitative survey data to present a 'snap-shot' of the contemporary labour situation on farms across the South West of England, drawing the preliminary sketch of farm labour composition on farms in the South West. It then introduces the opening analysis of the interview data, examining some of the various agents acting on the 'horizontal' network and how they relate to one another. The farmer-contractor interface in particular, forms an significant proportion of this chapter, followed by further relationships between farm labour contributors, livestock, and other

supporting agents within their lifescapes. Key events such as the Foot and Mouth crisis of 2001 are incorporated into this analysis in order to obtain a deeper understanding of emotional connections between farm labour contributors and aspects of their lifescapes.

Chapter Seven continues this analysis, weaving into the story other agents who act along the horizontal networks. Relationships between farm labour contributors and the farm and the land are revealed, further exploring attitudes between different actors at the same time as developing understandings and perceptions of place, nature-connectedness and environmental responsibility. Perceptions and attitudes to sustainable intensification are illustrated here.

Chapter Eight moves away from the actors most immediate to the farm worker to incorporate the narratives farm labour contributors possess with regards to those actors contributing to and affecting their wider lifescapes. The local community and its role as a source of identity, responsibility and conflict for the individual are all aspects that are observed within this chapter, with infrastructural changes in the local community contributing to a proportion of the analysis.

Chapter Nine examines the capacities and opportunities that are available to farm labour contributors, utilising the principle of the Human Capability Framework to identify any constraints on either a farm, local or national level to the potential matching process between farm labour contributors and related opportunities. Primarily, the chapter outlines the key actors in capacity formation beginning with the roots of the respondents, leading to an analysis of routes to a career path in agriculture. Opportunities are understood through the representation of the constraints cited by respondents that they perceive contribute to labour shortages.

Chapter Ten reminds the reader of the research aims and overarching questions of the thesis, before providing a summary of the key findings of the thesis resulting from the analyses of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The limitations of the research are critiqued in the following section until ultimately, the final part of the chapter offers some suggestions for future research stemming from the findings of this study.

Chapter Two: Contextualising the Place, Role and Value of the Farm Labour Contributor

> *'The traditional farm worker appeared, by 2000, to be even nearer extinction than the traditional hill farmer'* (Howkins 2003: 209)

2.0 Introduction

Any attempt to understand the situation of agricultural labour at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Britain cannot be achieved without situating it within the wider historical narrative of the farm worker and, more broadly, agriculture as an industry. Regional diversity has always been a significant factor within British agriculture and one of the effects of this diversity has been, and is still, played out in the hiring practices of farmers in each region. Outside of external, national drivers, numbers of workers employed have varied according to 'the regional nature and experience of farm work and farming systems and how they adapted to the processes of change' (Howkins 2003: 77). This key factor, along with the quality of data regarding not only the number of farm workers but also how these workers were defined, means that any statistical history of the farm worker in Britain can only ever be clumsily patch-worked together using fragments of the past, leaving untidy gaps in knowledge and understanding. However, the sociological history and definition of the farm worker is not just about numbers but also pertains to their embeddedness within the socio-economic fabric of Britain. Social and economic patterns have changed substantially over time due to a variety of factors. These changes include an increase in state intervention within agriculture, advances in related sciences, technology and mechanisation, modifications in data collation regarding agricultural statistics (Armstrong 1988), regional inequalities within farming (Howkins 2003), wage differentials between industries, and migration patterns between town and country (Gasson 1973). Consequently, perceptions of class, status, power and sense of identity of, and amongst farm workers within rural settings, as well as within the extended social landscape, have been affected. Armstrong agrees that 'any fresh attempt to write the history of the farm worker needs to start from the recognition that it cannot be usefully undertaken within a closed rural context' (Armstrong 1988: 15).

This chapter seeks to elucidate the story of farm labour via analyses of a broad range of literature, with a purpose to both contextualise contemporary understandings of the decline in farm labour over the last 150 years, and identify how official classification and recording of labour has consistently overlooked certain key actors who contribute to the agricultural labour market.

The period prior to the mid-nineteenth century has been extensively covered by numerous authors, so this chapter will skip over the Tolpuddle Martyrs (TUC 1934) and Captain Swing riots (Hobsbawn and Rudé 1969) to land at the point where official statistics surrounding farm workers began to be collated and published. And as these figures dip, rise, and then dip again (Figure 2.1), the drivers of these changes will be brought to light.

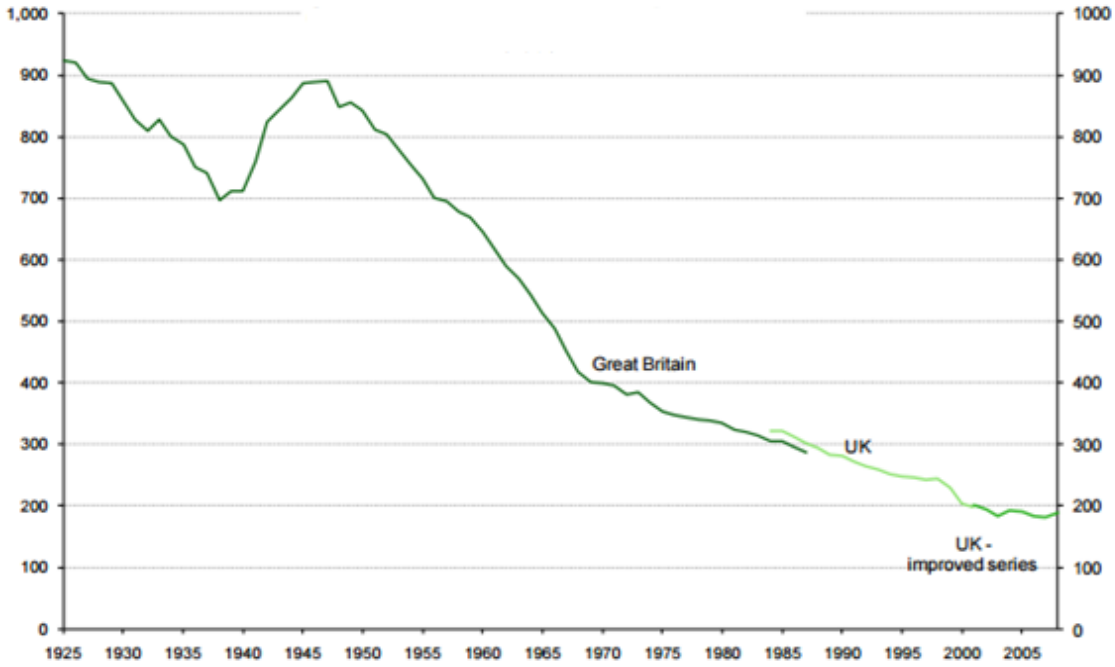

Figure 2.1 Numbers of Agricultural Workers in Britain/UK (thousands) **(***Source*: Bolton, P, Baker, C, Keep, M (2015: 10) House of Commons Library)

2.1 A Brief Note on Data

The quality of quantitative data regarding numbers of farm workers over the last 250 years has varied substantially. Early data obtained by Arthur Young in 1768, although information not gathered in 'a manner that would satisfy a modern statistician' (Armstrong 1988: 19), provided some idea of the number of farm workers by farm size and region at that time. And although Young's reputation has deteriorated since the 19th century, with his writing being described as 'biased, inaccurate and contradictory' (Chambers and Mingay 1966: 74), Brunt (2003) maintains that Young's data is 'the only major source of quantitative information' regarding agricultural labour inputs in the eighteenth century (ibid: 282).

The first 'official' figures illustrating numbers of employed farm workers in Great Britain became available from the mid-nineteenth century, in the form of the Great Britain Census of 1851, which shows a total of 1.7 million agricultural workers recorded as

employed in the country (Bolton et al 2015). Disadvantageously, this form of data collection only occurred on a ten-yearly basis until the Agricultural Census began collecting data on farm workers in the 1920s, leaving significant gaps in knowledge regarding numbers of farm workers between census years. Even so, it demonstrates that a significant decline occurred between 1861 and 1881, where a fall of 380,000 farm workers was recorded (Bolton et al 2015).

Each stage of data collection is prone to potential disparities in data. The 1881 Census specified that 'no one who was present on census night at a particular address could be left out of the tally and that no person absent from home could be written in' (Roberts et al 2003: 83). The effect of this on how representative the data really was is indeterminable. Much more detrimental to the value of the figures was; the failure of employers to respond at all; confusion as to who should be considered an agricultural worker; the actual recording and interpretation by administrative clerks of the raw data being flawed; and seasonal fluctuations not being represented at all. Wrigley (2004) adds to this critique of the earlier Census quality, pointing out that 'both those currently employed in the industry and those formerly employed but now retired or incapacitated were included' and that 'there is strong evidence to suggest that the number of those returned in 1851 as farmers' male relatives engaged in agriculture was substantially exaggerated' (ibid: 106).

Higgs (1995), however, suggests that 'the published Census reports most probably underestimate the numbers working on the land' (ibid: 700) overall. This is attributed to the omission of significant categories, such as seasonal workers; individuals not given occupational titles; and female relatives. In taking these actors into account, it is estimated that the original figure of 1.7 million offered by the 1851 census might, instead, be as high as 2 million (ibid: 709).

According to Mills, (1999) the initial aim of recording occupation in the Census was less about social status or stratification, instead being 'much more concerned to establish to what extent occupational conditions could be used to explain mortality levels in different sections of the population' (ibid: 71). This might explain the lack of rigour applied in data collation.

Official and regular statistics regarding agricultural wages began to be collected in 1918, and in 1921 the annual Agricultural Census, the first of which was taken in 1865, introduced the collection of data on the agricultural workforce, an annual enumeration of labour-related figures supplementing the decennial data that had been provided through earlier censuses. Due to differences between the two series of data; the population Census and the Agricultural Census, such as the process of self-

enumeration by workers in the population census, which didn't occur in the new agricultural census, as well as varying definitions around occupational terms, any attempts at 'close reconciliation between the two series' creates considerable difficulties (MAFF 1968: 60).

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) now conducts an annual sample survey of agricultural holdings in England and the UK, with the inclusion of data on labour. However, due to the fact that it only records the labour working on the farm at the moment of data collection in June, vital information regarding numbers of workers for the rest of the year is missed.

Table 2.1

Number of people working on commercial agricultural holdings on 1 June: England (in thousands)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change
Farmers, partners, directors and spouses	**186**	**180**	**178**	**165**	**170**	**174**	**173**	**172**	**174**	**174**	**173**	-6.99
Full time	91	87	89	85	86	88	89	88	88	90	89	-2.20
Part time	95	93	90	80	85	86	84	83	86	84	84	-11.58
Salaried managers	**14**	**14**	**14**	**10**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	-21.43
Full time	9	10	10	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	-11.11
Part time	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	-25.00
Other workers	**117**	**114**	**120**	**117**	**112**	**118**	**123**	**113**	**117**	**120**	**117**	0.00
Regular full time	45	44	47	46	47	48	49	47	47	47	47	4.44
Regular part time	26	29	30	29	28	29	30	28	28	28	27	3.85
Casual workers	46	41	43	42	37	40	45	39	43	45	44	-4.35
Total number of people working on commercial agricultural holdings (thousands)	**317**	**308**	**312**	**293**	**293**	**303**	**307**	**296**	**302**	**305**	**301**	-5.05

Source: Adapted from Defra (2017a)

Recent figures published by Defra, demonstrate that the decline in workers has slowed dramatically, observing a pattern variation where numbers have begun to fluctuate up and down slightly between 2006 and 2016 (Table 2.1) across all types of worker. In fact, numbers of regular part-time and regular full-time workers recorded have increased slightly over the ten-year period. However, these results are based on a sample survey[1] and do not consider survey errors such as non-response bias or administrative data errors. Additionally, agricultural contractors are completely omitted from this data series.

A separate report on the use of contractors was, however, introduced for the first time by Defra in 2014, with agricultural contractors finally being officially recognised as a

[1] June survey sample size varies each year according to national and EU requirements

'key part of the agricultural industry' (ibid; 2). The Farm Business Survey (FBS) also provides data estimates regarding the amount of money spent on contractors between 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 (FBS 2016) (Table 2.2). Again, comparing these sources of information is complicated as the Defra June Survey distinguishes between casual labour, 'paid direct by the farmer at a rate per hour or per day' and contract labour, where the business submits an invoice on the completion of work (Defra 2014b). The FBS on the other hand, includes contract labour involving no machinery and casual labour under the same category, and separates contracting involving machinery.

Table 2.2

Detailed output and input costs of labour – per farm, all farm types

	Average costs for one farm		
	2004/2005	**2014/2015**	**% Difference**
England			
Regular Labour	16,372	21,264	**30%**
Casual	3,377	5,122	**51%**
Contract	6,928	13,213	**91%**
South West			
Regular Labour	11,306	15,460	**37%**
Casual	2,593	3,094	**19%**
Contract	5,414	12,483	**131%**

Source: Adapted from Farm Business Survey Data

It would seem that data collection methods and literature referring to numbers of farm workers have, from the inception of data collation on labour numbers to the most recent count carried out by Defra, fallen short of the necessary 'common standard' described by Scott (1998: 24), mentioned in chapter one. Subsequently, these well-established quantitative methods of agricultural analysis ignore the social intricacies of labour dynamics in UK farming, suggesting that their purpose might be more one of 'legibility' (Scott 1998). According to Scott, 'no administrative system is capable of representing any existing social community except through a heroic and greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification' (ibid: 22). However, this simplification occurs regularly, especially in population measurement, and is an attempt at making said population 'legible'. Moving populations, such as seasonal workers or possibly even contractors for example, present great difficulty for the state in terms of surveillance

and control. In order to make these populations legible, the state needs to simplify the social aspects of their everyday challenges and struggles. To achieve any kind of success in state interventions to improve the human condition, according to Scott (1998), local conditions must be taken into account and high-modernist ideologies not always taken as definitive. An example Scott gives of how the adoption of uniformity might be of detriment to agriculture is in the fact that, historically, cultivars needed to be selected that were compatible with the mechanisation that replaced hired labour, thus decreasing genetic variability and increasing the vulnerability of crops to major crop epidemics. Similarly, local conditions also need to be taken into account in consideration of the socio-economic variables tied up in agriculture, and more specifically, the labour market.

Lobley at al (2002) report that as 'farms are now increasingly complex businesses […] the June Census as it stands may no longer be the most appropriate basis for the collection of data' (ibid: 25). They suggest Defra 'review the objectives for collection of agricultural statistics including the June Census and introduce a pilot alternative census prior to any wholesale change' (ibid: 26).

Obtaining the correct information regarding numbers of farm workers is important in order to be able to identify, implement and effectively monitor governmental policies supporting the future of agriculture in this country.

2.2 A Historical Placing of the British Farm Worker

2.2.1 Late Victorian England and the Beginning of the Decline

The agricultural revolution, occurring loosely between 1700 and 1850 according to Mingay[2] (1977), precipitated a dramatic increase in the agricultural labour force, estimated at being somewhere between 50 and 75 per cent. In tandem with this rise, productivity per worker is also believed to have increased to levels rivalling European counterparts at the time (Beckett 1990: 60). Two decades of prosperity, often described as the 'golden age' in agriculture, followed this which coincided with a sharp decline in the number of farm workers (Perren 1995). The assumption has been that agricultural workers benefited under this era of buoyant prices and profits, largely stimulated by the advent of 'high farming'. Perry (1981) provides a nod of agreement, acknowledging a 'forty-year period of quiescence, of undoubted poverty but also of slow amelioration, [which] broadly corresponds with the age of high farming' (ibid: 165). Armstrong, however, points out that the evidence for any actual monetary benefit is particularly weak and is based upon inferences made from rural crime patterns, and actions

[2] A contested issue. Kerridge (2013), for example, argues that the agricultural revolution occurred from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.

stemming from social protest. More tangible evidence lay in the wage differential between the north and south, representing the 'firmest statement that can be made concerning wages' at that time (Armstrong 1988: 91). This differential favoured the more prosperous northern regions of England, where coal mining was fast becoming the dominant industrial sector, which some believe caused the inflation of real wage levels in the farming industry. Even this assertion, however, has been contested regarding its accuracy. In his analysis of the linkage between industrialisation and agricultural workers in Northumberland, Kelly (2014) claims that 'the real wage indices that so many commentators have relied upon to have proven to be unreliable at best' (ibid: 322). His argument rests upon the fact that the prevalence of the 'hind system' in Northumberland meant that the majority of agricultural workers were still being paid in kind and thus average weekly wage rates recorded at the time were 'entirely irrelevant for labourers contracted under the 'hind' system' (2014: 322). He regards the day rate figures stated at the time as 'hypothetically high' (ibid: 322).

So why do official figures suggest such a dramatic drop in numbers of farm workers (a fall of 380,000) between 1861 and 1881 (Bolton et al 2015:10)? It is quite likely that a substantial decline did occur, however it is important to recognise that actual figures might be somewhat skewed due to confusion in census returns. For example, Armstrong (1988) suggests 'the fall of 75 per cent in the number of female farm servants over just twenty years may seriously overestimate the extent of their decline' (ibid: 95). In spite of these discrepancies, it is clear that there was a drop in the employment of women during this period, and due to the introduction of the Gangs Act in 1867, preventing children under eight from being employed, a shift in child labour likely affected numbers also. Another assumption is that the introduction of agricultural technology pushed farm workers out of the industry. Dunlop (1913) agrees that the rural exodus was in part due to the adoption of machinery, however, he states that 'the displacement was not so great as is sometimes imagined' (ibid: 119). According to Thirsk and Whetham (1978) it was 'low earnings, long hours, the scarcity of cottages and their poor quality [and] the lack of opportunity for enterprising men' that caused further migration away from agriculture (ibid: 59). Because mechanisation had little impact on the overall demand for labour it was more likely that new industries were tempting rural workers elsewhere, the famous internal migration of farm workers known as 'the drift from the land', while Hasbach (1966) argues that it was in the raising of rents and the farmers desire to thus 'economise their work and to employ as few labourers as possible' (ibid: 251), that pushed workers out of the industry. The decennial nature of the census-taking also causes difficulties in ascertaining exactly when the fall in figures occurred.

Keatinge and Littlewood (1948) associate the following era with ‘a long battle against overseas farmers […], long periods of falling prices, a run of bad harvests in Great Britain, and, above all, our policy of free trade’ (ibid: 281). The 1870s witnessed a massive increase in imports, stimulating a dramatic drop in prices and the beginning of the great depression. Many farmers were bankrupted, especially small-scale arable farmers, and subsequent to this, 1877 – 1882 brought terrible seasonal weather with droughts, blizzards, and snow, causing further damage to profits. The issue of labour morphed into one where farmers now had to revaluate their labour requirements in order that their farms endure. Farmers sought to keep the labour bill down and so ‘the strategy of most farmers was simply to avoid filling all the vacancies arising from death, old age or dismissals’ (Armstrong 1988: 112), the elimination process of natural wastage. Land-use change from crops to livestock contributed to an element of ‘push’ from the land, as emigration did ‘pull’, generating complaints regarding the quality of labour which remained. Armstrong (1988) attributes much of the drift from the land at this point in time, to ‘the reluctance of sons to follow their fathers on to the land’ (ibid: 113).

Wages and living standards of agricultural workers were not improving in line with inflation and a proliferation of unions began to emerge, including the National Agricultural Labourers’ Union (NALU) formed in 1872. Describing this as a ‘Revolt of the Field’, Dunbabin attributes this movement to ‘a mixture of anger and of hope’ (Aldcroft and Dunbabin 1964: 112). Earlier authors, such as Green (1920), recognise it as ‘an economic, not a political revolt. It was a cry for bread and not for votes’ (ibid: 28). Mild success was had by these unions but after peaking at membership levels of over 86,000 in 1874, by 1880 the numbers belonging to the NALU had fallen by half and by 1895 agricultural trade unionism was practically defunct. Armstrong ascribes this to farm workers not only being sub-divided amongst themselves but also to their dispersal and variation in community character, meaning that ‘their responsiveness to the collectivist approach of trade unionism […] might be partial at best’ (1988: 149). According to Green:

> ‘It is not surprising that the farmers defeated the labourers. Threatened with eviction from their farm-tied cottages; threatened with the loss of both public and private charities by the class which governed them; voteless, isolated; for the most part unable to read or write, and with the air full of rumours of appropriation of union funds sedulously circulated by their enemies; the miracle would have been if the men had won’ (Green 1920: 59)

The changeable nature of agricultural unionism during the last part of the nineteenth century has been described by Hasbach (1966) as ‘not fruitless’. Instead, he ventures

that if farmworkers 'did not succeed in permanently improving the position of the labourer, they shook him out of his hopelessness and indifference' (ibid: 303).

2.2.2 The Edwardian Period Prior to WWI

Despite the rise in prosperity and stability from 1896 until the beginning of the Edwardian period, the 'drift from the land' persisted as a problem. Fewer than half of all farmworkers between the ages of 15 and 24 remained within this period, and the rate of female labour particularly continued to decline, according to the 1901 census figures (Armstrong 1988: 135). However, the 1912 census demonstrates that this outflow of labour was briefly halted between 1901 and 1911, a period which observed an increase of 9% in the number of farmworkers. This brief reversal in the deterioration of agricultural worker numbers was 'due in some measure to the fact that rising prices were easing the squeeze on profits, which had earlier caused to seek economies so vigorously' (ibid: 137).

1906 saw the inception of what is considered the precursor to modern agricultural trade unionism, the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Smallholders' Union (ECALSU) which in 1911 changed its name to the National Agricultural Labourers' and Rural Workers' Union due to modest growth which showed signs of it moving beyond Norfolk, the site of its inception. Some strikes occurred during this time but agricultural trade unions were still perceived as fairly weak, demonstrating a 'failure to make the weight of their numbers count in the political sphere' (Armstrong 1988: 153). The perception of the farm worker regarding his situation in the wider social sphere was one of increasing class awareness. Despite an undercurrent of resentment, social tension in villages was fairly benign, and any display of antagonism or harboured anger would more likely be directed at urban counterparts rather than employers (Armstrong 1988). This idea pertains to Newby's *The Deferential Worker* and is discussed further in section 2.3.5.

2.2.3 The War Years

Mass military mobilisation at the beginning of the First World War initiated a sharp decline in the available labour force for agriculture. However, in comparison to its European neighbours, Britain has 'long been recognised as an exceptional success story' during this period (Dewey 1989: 1). Where production levels took a significant drop elsewhere, the UK was able to maintain a steady food supply throughout the war (Dewey 1979). This was largely attributed to the Lloyd George government in 1917-18. With regards to farm worker numbers, the move from voluntary recruitment at the start of the war, to conscription in 1916, subsequently resulted in a 90% drop in the supply of conventional labourers compared to pre-war levels. This was sufficiently recovered

to about 97% of its pre-war level by the end of 1918 using replacement labour. Soldiers formed the predominant part of this number for the first year or so, with prisoners of war and the Women's Land Army accounting for the rest, especially during the last few months of the war (Dewey 1979). This tripartite of officially supplied agricultural labour, however, still only made up just over half of the replacement labour during the war, with the rest accounted for by local women and other labour termed 'miscellaneous.' Soldiers proved expensive for farmers during this time, acquiring for average work a wage similar to that earned by skilled workers previously. However, the productivity of the soldiers by the end of the war hugely outweighed that of the prisoners of war, who apparently worked at 'half the speed of British civilian workers' (Dewey 1979: 113).

This period also provided a background to the introduction of a wages board for agriculture, for which demand had been steadily growing. After much debate between the War Cabinet, the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the House of Lords, the Corn Production Act was passed in 1917, part of which included a central Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales (Howkins and Verdon 2009). The principal objective of the act sought guaranteed prices for both oats and wheat, and an increase in production, as well as fixed minimum wages for farm labourers. Hours, overtime, holidays and conditions, as well as wages, were all discussed at county level. Once agreed by county representatives, minimum specification agreements passed through the Central Wages Board in London, and by and large, wages increased yearly following its introduction. However, this was repealed in 1921 under the auspice that it was 'too rigid and coercive, imposing inflexible hours, and […] reliant on prosecutions' (Howkins and Verdon 2009: 268). Jurisdiction over wages was handed to county committees which, according to Howkins and Verdon (2009), ended in disaster and farmers effectively paying 'starvation' wages.

Social conditions of farm workers around this time remained fairly dire, according to Keatinge and Littlewood (1948):

> 'The farm worker has little prospect of rising in the world. With wages barely sufficient to live on it was almost impossible to accumulate capital to farm on his own account, nor could he often hope to rise to the position of foreman or manager, since few farms were large enough or prosperous enough to support such posts' (ibid 1948: 282)

Rural housing conditions in the late 30s continued to be 'generally bad'. Often without electricity, gas, or water, a large percentage of houses were considered 'unfit for human habitation' (Keatinge and Littlewood 1948: 282). The decline in population due to the drift from the land led to many schools closing down in rural areas, and towns

tended to attract the better teachers, mainly due to the superior conditions offered, thus drastically affected educational opportunities for rural children.

Despite lessons learnt regarding Britain's self-sufficiency during World War I, insufficient action was taken to prepare the country for a similar dip in food security in the advent of another war. In 1938, over 70% of food supplies by value were still imports and the total acreage of land used for agricultural crops was decreasing. However, in 1939 the Agricultural Development Act was introduced and County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs), set up by the Ministry of Agriculture, gained control over land use. Comprising of 'influential landowners, farmers and land-related personnel', these committees, in spite of largely unlimited powers, often sought the cooperation of farmers. Their establishment was, according to Short (2007), seen as 'one of the war's major administrative successes and perhaps the war's most successful example of decentralisation and democratic use of control' (ibid: 221). According to Short (2007), 'committee members were not chosen to represent special interests, except for the appointing of one member specifically to represent the farmworkers' (ibid: 235). These were drawn from either the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) or the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NAUW). The committees, however, were not concerned with 'the social relations of production' (ibid: 228) apart from labour supplies and workers housing.

As a result of the 'war ags' efficiency, after many years of decline, the farm work force began to swell again, increasing by 30% between 1938 and 1945 (MAFF 1952 in Armstrong 1988: 211). This was largely due to the rapid response required to large numbers of agricultural labourers being lost to the military, as well as the increase in land being used for crops; tilled acreage increased by approximately 62% (Armstrong 1988: 204). This requirement for fast auxiliary labour supplies was largely filled by the Women's Land Army, a group originally formed in 1917 in response to the lack of young men available to work on the land, in the form of The Land Army (Grayzel 1999). Numbers during the First World War, never accounting for more than 7% of the replacement labour, were incomparable to those of the second, rallying a considerable 'army' of women (Armstrong 1988). Rather than recruit local women from rural areas, the Women's Land Army aimed to attract women who worked in factories and offices. Although initial responses to the employment of these women generated a certain reticence amongst farmers, meaning that only 2,800 had been placed with a farm as 1939 drew to a close, this rapidly changed in the years to follow. By 1943 the strength of the Land Girls had grown to 87,000 strong, proving not only incredibly valuable and efficient to farmers and the population as a whole, but also economical (Armstrong 1988).

After the seemingly bright prospects for farm workers immediately following the war, arising from the recently elected Labour party's introduction of the Agriculture Act in 1947, a period noted by Short (2007) as leading into the productivist phase, the number of full-time farm workers peaked at 748,000 in 1949 and wages continued to improve for a few years (Armstrong 1988). The productivist phase was characterised by 'an emphasis on increasing farm output through modernization and industrialisation' (Hayes-Conroy 2007: 44), one consequence of which was the facilitation of labour shedding. However, the period between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1960s witnessed the most rapid decline in agricultural workers, according to evaluations of the Agricultural Census. The population of workers dropped from almost 900,000 (including members of the Women's Land Army, prisoners-of-war, and 140,000 casual workers) to a little over 400,000 (Holderness 1985: 132). Repatriation of prisoners of war by the end of 1948, and the dissolution of the Women's Land Army in 1950 contributed to this marked decline.

Following on from 1950, both numbers of workers in full-time and part-time categories began to decline and between 1957 and 1967, full-time employment dropped by a third, and casual labour by even more. This era also saw the introduction of a reconstructed Agricultural Wages Board (AWB). Set up in 1947, this board did not replace the county committees per se, but it was given the power to override agreements made by them if required. This had some success in seeing agricultural workers wages increase until the mid-1960s, at which point the basic wage rate of farm workers began to fall again, relative to their industrial worker counterparts (Holderness 1985: 136). According to Howkins (2003), the 1947 Agriculture Act 'gave little to the farm worker, although indirectly he or she could be said to have benefited from the increased stability of the industry as a whole' (ibid: 147). Howkins states that despite the Agricultural Wages Board becoming a permanent feature and thus ensuring some level of security in the wage of the farm worker, however pitiful it might have contrasted with non-agricultural pay, working conditions often remained very poor. The 'tied cottage' situation which Labour had pledged to be rid of was still prevalent, tying farm workers housing to their jobs, and few workers felt that they had received their fair share reaped by farmers after the 'post-war settlement' for agriculture (ibid: 147).

2.2.4 A Note on Gender

Early twentieth century literary publication titles such as *Men and the fields* (Bell 1939) and *Ask the fellows who cut the hay* (Ewart Evans 1956) denote an industry devoid of women, whilst World War I and II references, with their emphasis on Land Girls, taint the role of women in agriculture as being both temporary, yet representative of 'the nostalgic idea of redemption through a return to an idyllic countryside' (Grayzel 1999:

168). Due to the afore-mentioned inadequacies in data collection regarding female agricultural workers, the extent and role of women in agriculture from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century remains contested (Sharpe 1999), yet their decline in numbers on a national scale in inarguable.

Verdon describes how the perception of women in agriculture by the interwar period of the nineteenth century saw them viewed as 'a distinct social problem in the eyes of many contemporary commentators' particularly women involved in gang-labour outdoor field work (2000: 225). The complexity of issues attached to these representations stemmed from economic uncertainties which incited anxieties associated with women working in agriculture (Verdon 2009). Paying women to work the land resulted in prejudice from unions, accusing them of both undercutting the wages of male workers; and farmers who described them as expensive. The physical and moral implications of working the land also raised questions about the suitability of agricultural work for women but, according to Verdon (2009), the interwar period also witnessed a transition of women's perceptions towards the work, driving young rural women into urban jobs offering better prospects, whilst at the same time attracting middle-class women into a 'positive lifestyle choice, to pursue independence and status, or to enjoy work in the open air' (ibid: 130).

This decline eventually went into reverse and currently 28% of the British agricultural workforce is made up of women, rising from 23,000 in 2010 to 25,000 in 2013 (Defra 2016). A greater number of women than men enrolled on to agricultural-related courses in 2015 (Defra 2016), signifying important transitions in perceptions of the role of women in agriculture, by both the industry and women themselves.

2.2.5 The 60s and Onwards

The 1960s and 70s observed several significant changes in British agriculture which was to further affect numbers employed. Firstly, the 'nature of farm work underwent rapid change as a consequence of mechanisation' (Armstrong 1988: 227), a continuation of a trend that began in the 1950s. Harvesting by combine, contracting out hedging and ditching work, cutting down the need for weeding using spraying methods, and the advancement of technology in milking on dairy farms, all led to a transformation in labour requirements. The 'drift from the land' was becoming much more about workers being 'pushed' away from the industry, as opposed to being 'pulled' by other industries as had happened previously.

This labour push versus labour pull paradigm is discussed further by Alvarez-Cuadrado and Poschke (2009), who explain, 'improvements in agricultural technology combined with the effect of Engel's law of demand push resources out of the agricultural sector

(the “labour push” hypothesis)’ and ‘improvements in industrial technology attract labour into this sector (the “labour pull” hypothesis)’ (Alvarez-Cuadrado and Poschke 2009: 1). According to Alvarez-Cuadrado and Poschke, the strength of the “push” or “pull” has varied over the last two centuries, with the “pull” being the predominant direction of agricultural workers pre-World War I, and “labour push” taking over following World War II, a change occurring as part of the wider Green Revolution. According to their analyses, ‘given the continuing importance of the agricultural sector in today’s poor economies, it is crucial to have a proper understanding of the historical determinants of structural change [in agriculture]’ (ibid: 2).

Secondly, Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973, and thus adopted the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which was already in place, the aim of which was to create a single market in agricultural produce in the European Community. The prevailing feature of the UK’s adoption of the CAP was that ‘in general, UK producer and consumer prices [would] be much higher than their level during the late 1960s and early 1970s’ (Overseas Development Institute 1973: 3). Another key aim of the CAP was to increase productivity by promoting technological progress, leading to the provision of grants and subsidies for the modernisation of farms, often via the procurement of machinery. This resulted in a continuation of the decline of the workforce due to the ‘push’ factor described earlier, as ‘agricultural policy was directed towards assisting the transition of farming from its position as a high to a low employer of labour’ (Martin 2000:135), clashing somewhat with certain social goals of the Treaty of Rome such as maintaining rural communities. Although, Martin (2000) describes how the ‘status of farm workers improved as a result of their transformation from labourers to technicians’ (ibid: 149) and agricultural policies introduced for Environmentally Sensitive Areas in 1986 did generate some local employment through specialised projects in conservation such as dry-stone wall repairs and traditional hedge laying (Martin 2000). Howkins (2003) states that the significance ‘was not that agriculture ceased being subsidised but rather that the method of subsidy transformed’ (ibid: 157). Farmers in Europe initially flourished under the CAP and adapted quickly to increased mechanisation and, as the number of farm workers declined, prices steadily increased and ‘altered the structure of agricultural industry enormously’ (Newby 1977: 145).

2.2.6 Howard Newby and *The Deferential Worker*

As Armstrong points out, ‘the social situation and the psychology of the farmworker cannot be fully understood by referring exclusively to conditions within the farming industry’ (1988: 237). The relationships between the farm worker, the farmer and the community as a whole are also key factors in attempting to understand the agricultural

worker in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a debate taken up by Newby in his seminal work, *The Deferential Worker* (1977). Newby was concerned less with the conceptualisation of the rural and more with an examination of how social relations were acted out as lived experience. His work is 'an empirical study into the theoretical problem of workers' false class consciousness' (Hillyard 2007: 24), giving the workers a voice in defining and interpreting their situation.

His chosen locale was East Suffolk and the research method employed was 'deliberately eclectic, involving the routine perusal of agricultural and population census statistics, a search of historical resources (both documentary and oral), participant observation and survey investigation' (Newby 1977: 123). Living with a farm worker and his family in a tied cottage for a period of six months, provided a useful and insightful base out of which Newby conducted interviews with seventy-one farmers and 233 farm workers in the surrounding parishes, executing said fieldwork between March and August of 1972.

Newby examines the farm worker with regards to their relationship to their employer and how this has changed since the Napoleonic Wars, distinguishing not only between the middle-class and working class, but also between those two sub-sets and agricultural workers, with a specific focus on the deference associated with farm workers in relation to their employers. This is a continuation of work done by Pahl (1966) who examined class relations in rural communities, yet who specifically excluded the agricultural worker.

Newby reasoned that less interest was shown towards the agricultural worker within the realm of the greater working-class due to their propensity to show less inclination towards the labour movement. This he attributed to the persistence of small-scale production isolating them from the greater movement and potential support therein, as well as their work situation fostering an idea of identification with their employer, resulting in the act of deference.

Drawing on Lockwood's (1966) typology of the manual worker, out of the three types of worker classified by Lockwood, 'proletarian', 'deferential' and 'privatised', Newby focused on the farm workers and their place within the deferential category:

> 'It is a relationship rather than a set of attitudinal attributes that the concept of deference seems better to account, not only for the variation in the social consciousness of the agricultural workers, but for how their everyday social interaction with the farmer is transacted' (Newby 1977: 434)

However, despite Newby's overall inference towards powerlessness in this study, he also acknowledged that ambivalences towards the worker-employer relationship existed; suggesting that their construction of class was not fixed:

> 'Today most workers are integrated neither in the oppositional working-class sub culture […] nor […] middle-class culture of their employers […] In varying proportions they come into contact with a variety of belief systems so that their world-view has become ambivalent and fragmented' (1977:434)

Fantasia (1992) discusses these ambivalences in working-class consciousness, drawing on Parkin's idea of 'a dual value system that provides different moral frames of references in different situations' (ibid: 6). He suggests that most analyses overlook the paradoxes and fluctuations in class consciousness, assuming they are static. According to Fantasia, these oscillations occur between individual responses to survey research in situ and responses occurring 'in the midst' of collective action. As an example, he draws upon Newby who describes the deferential farm worker as being 'torn between the contractual elements of his relationship to the farmer and the personal, particularist loyalties inherent in that same relationship [and] often ambivalent in his moral assessment of the social and economic position of his employer' (ibid: 6).

Constraints provide a significant focus in Newby's analyses, as he describes the prominence of their role in the formation of the farm worker's ideology regarding his place in relation to other actors in his lifescape. The tied-cottage as a constraint to the economic development and status of the farm worker, presenting 'a hindrance to mobility out of agriculture' is a key theme in Newby's work (Newby 1972: 23). According to Newby, 'the tied cottage is regarded as the centre-piece of the system which has condemned the agricultural worker to poverty and dependence over the last 150 years or more' (Newby 1977: 182). He suggests that the tied-cottage is symbolic of the 'master-and-servant' relationship (ibid: 183). Newby believes that the ensuing dependence resulting from the tied-cottage scenario instils a sense of fear in the farm worker which might prevent them from speaking up for their rights. He states that the tied-cottage 'represents a microcosm of the wider issue of class relationships in agriculture' (1977: 186). At the same time, the tied-cottage accounted for a uniquely intimate relationship between the farm worker and his employer, thus contributing further to a sense of dependence and constraint. These 'symbolic boundaries' contributed greatly to the formation of the farm workers social identity (ibid: 279).

Newby's research in East Anglia analysed the transitions within rural communities from the more traditional occupational communities, into encapsulated and farm-centred communities, describing the internal 'push' effect of changing technologies and

economies, and the external effects of both ‘pull’ effect from urban centres and the arrival of urban ‘newcomers’ on the changing nature of status of the farm workers.

Within the occupational community, the skill of the worker amidst that community was that from which he derived his status. Although society as a whole might have placed the farm worker on the bottom rung, within the close-knit world of the occupational community, his status was incrementally based upon his abilities on the farm and great pride was taken in achieving, maintaining and demonstrating this. Within the occupational community, even though the attributional status of the farm worker placed him at the bottom of the hierarchy, the interactional status was paramount in accruing self-esteem.

During the 60s and 70s, however, a combination of the decline in rural employment and the increasing urbanisation of villages eroded the occupational community, forcing farm employees to become either encapsulated,where the old occupational community, a set of close-knit locals, separated themselves from the newcomers (the ‘new immigrants’ coming in from the towns) (ibid: 327) or farm-centred. Although the social stereotypes imported by the newcomers further exacerbated the perception of the deferential worker to some extent, this social movement precipitated a change in the dynamic between the farm worker and their employer by blurring the relationship boundary slightly, creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ situation, situating the farm worker and their employer apart from the newcomers. This ‘great urban conspiracy’ against agriculture, exacerbated by the policy of cheap food dominated by state control of Britain’s farming meant that the worker was less likely to blame the employer for their poverty, an idea that the employer was keen to reinforce (ibid: 352). Equally as damaging to the local status system was the migration of local workers to urban-based employment which, according to Newby, ‘in a myriad of subtle ways […] reminds the farm worker of his inferiority’ (ibid: 337).

However, with the introduction of machinery, the ability to operate bigger and more technical apparatus allowed for some status-enhancement. Newby discovered that job satisfaction was fairly high compared to other forms of manual labour, and that reasons for leaving were usually less about disliking the work and more about pay and conditions.

In *Mobility of Farm Workers*, Gasson (1974) examines the movement of hired farm workers in terms of the ‘drift from the land’ exodus in the eastern region of the UK where the hired workforce was predominantly male, most of whom were employed full-time, and where women made up half of the part time and half of the seasonal workers. Gasson describes how the:

> ‘Supply of labour available for agriculture is affected in two ways. First, some farm workers will be attracted to jobs in new industries or in service occupations…Second, improvements in the range and quality of urban amenities and services, stimulated by the growth of population and economic activity, can be enjoyed by the indigenous rural population, thus affecting the lives of those who remain on farms’ (ibid: 21)

In a later work, Gasson (1979) determined that initial concerns surrounding the supply of labour, as opposed to actual demand for it, were unfounded at the time. Preventing the ‘drift from the land’ became less of a focus, and instead, emphasis was placed upon on ‘making effective use of scarce manpower resources remaining in agriculture’ (ibid: 2) and the pressure to economise on labour-use. Labour shortages would, however, prove to be of major concern later.

2.2.7 Since Newby

Following on from Newby’s analysis of the farmworker, Danziger sought to ‘determine whether farmworkers have been powerless to promote and defend what are taken to be their interests and, if so, explore the nature of their powerlessness’ (1988: 35). Her perception during the late 1980s was of the countryside’s poverty being ‘well represented by the hired agricultural workforce’ and went on to say that it would be ‘impossible to describe Britain’s 130,000 full-time workers as anything but poor’ (1988: 1). She states that 50 per cent of farm workers still lived in tied cottages in the late 1980s and the social perception of the farmworker continued to be one where they were ‘still being denied the rightful recognition of their skill and sophistication, with the mass media continuing to present farm workers as either “country bumpkins” or as unskilled farm “labourers”’ (1988: 5). But, Danziger (1988) points out that machinery not only served as a catalyst in the push mechanism of the ‘drift from the land’, but also affected those remaining farm workers, necessitating ‘an increasing demand for skill from these workers’ and designating more responsibility due to the high costs involved and the lack of shared labour (ibid: 68).

Danziger also tackles the question surrounding the lack of union action or success discussed earlier by Armstrong, stating it can not necessarily be attributed purely to the dispersal of the workers as farmers are also similarly scattered but the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) had, at the time of writing, about 90 per cent of farmers in Britain as members. She fails to mention that the NFU is a significantly different body to that of the farm workers’ unions, resembling more a business lobby than a union organisation. Burchardt (2002) points out that the second half of the twentieth century saw an ‘extraordinary relationship’ between farmers and government policy-makers which

mainly operated through 'the axis' between the NFU and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) (ibid: 202) Comparison between the two groups, therefore, might be a rather futile endeavour. However, Danziger uses Newby's ideas around weakness in the housing and labour markets as a springboard towards her own research regarding political powerlessness and the link to wage determination and the effectiveness of the NUAAW.

The thirty years following Newby's work witnessed an increasing control of corporate power over retailing, meaning that 'the bargaining power of farmers in the market has been severely reduced' (Clunies-Ross and Hildyard 1992). This loss of power by the farmers over the process of production meant that prices for produce fell dramatically, ensuring wages are kept as low as possible, encouraging an ever-greater need for effective use of resources.

The neo-liberal push towards greater efficiency meant:

> 'The logical outcome of demanding food at the lowest possible unit cost is not just the degradation of the environment and the possible contamination of food and water with agrochemicals. If unit costs must be reduced, then inputs such as labour, which are expensive, must also be reduced. This can be achieved by shedding labour, for instance by crowding animals together in intensive rearing systems which can be largely automated. It can also be achieved by driving down rates of pay for agricultural labour, or by employing casual workers instead of permanent ones' (Clunies-Ross and Hildyard 1992)

The result of the epicentres of power moving from the farmer to the relatively small number of corporate retailers as well as the fall in profit margins has largely transformed agriculture as an industry, rapidly moving away from farming as a 'culture' to a more intensive industry, exacting labour-savings techniques such as improved technology, new varieties of crops and expanding farms, at the same time as extracting greater efficiency out of their workers via new monitoring methods and management techniques (Rogaly 2008).

2.2.8 The Post-Productivist Phase

Ball (1987b) identifies what he describes as the 'intermittent labour forms'; part-time, off-farm based labour, and how the MAFF Censuses were unrepresentative of the true inputs of labour, at least in 1984. This is partly due to records of on-farm labour being taken at a single point in time, but also due to the MAFF Census only recording some seasonal workers and self-employed contractors. According to Ball, only approximately 20% of intermittent labour was recorded by the Census (1987: 143). This structural

change within farming, Ball believes, was a result of 'constraints on the supply of potential directly-recruited intermittent labour', as well as the change in rules regarding unemployment benefit for those who worked seasonally (ibid: 147). In a later article, Ball refers to the results of a survey conducted by the readers of trade journal, Farm Contractor (1986), which estimated that the number of contractors grew by about 50 per cent between 1950 and the late 1980s, reaching a number of almost 6,000 (1987). From his own labour market survey of twenty-one parishes in the north and South West Midlands and North Wales, Ball identifies a higher incidence of contract work undertaken in arable and dairy units, where over 80% of farms declared the use of contractors, and listed the main tasks performed by contractors that year as being hedge-cutting, combining, silage making, ploughing, harvesting hay, corn and sugar beet, and sowing and planting; all traditional farm tasks (Ball 1987a: 483). He writes that this massive change in labour patterns in the late twentieth century 'really is a revolution' (ibid: 486). The role of contractors and the wider flexible labour force will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

Short (2007) recognises a post-productivist phase in farming, 'with an inception accorded to the mid-1980s' (ibid: 218), the indicators of which are, according to Wilson and Rigg (2003) 'policy change; organic farming; counter-urbanisation; the inclusion of environmental NGOs at the core of policy-making; the consumption of the countryside; and on-farm diversification activities' (ibid: 681). All of these indicators affect farm labour requirements to some extent or another. For example, a report published by the Soil Association in 2006 claimed that 'organic farming in the UK provides 32% more jobs per farm than the equivalent non-organic farms' (ibid: 8). A survey carried out by Lobley et al (2005) concluded that farm businesses, on average, employed 6.4 people per farm compared to 4.6 people on non-organic farms. However, it is not clear as to whether contractors were included in these figures. The assumption is that they were not. The general conclusion from their report was that 'organic farms 'punch above their weight' in employment provision' (ibid: 67).

Other aspects of the aforementioned indicators of agriculture's post-productivist phase include counter-urbanisation (Halfacree 1997), a topic dealt with by Newby in the 1970s which continues to this day, whereby local workers are often priced out of the market on housing by urban newcomers (Newby 1977), and farm diversification, which might call present the challenge of either upskilling or deskilling to workers on farms in transition.

With regards to figures for incomes from agriculture for farmers and farm workers, according to Defra, these are best examined in two periods, before the 1990s and after. From the 1970s until the 1990s, incomes for both tended to follow movements in

commodity prices, as well as weather patterns, to some extent. After the 1990s, exchange rates play a much greater role, thus increases in exchange rates, impacts of BSE, and lower world commodity prices all contributed to a drastic drop in both farm prices and incomes in the late 1990s (Defra 2010).

Evans et al (2002) question the dualistic nature of productivist/post-productivist thinking, suggesting that as a concept, post-productivism 'appears to be a distraction from developing theoretically informed perspectives on agriculture' (ibid: 325). They call for an abandonment of the term, requiring instead new theoretical approaches that avoid dualistic thinking. Actor network theory (ANT) is cited as one such possibility.

2.2.9 Structural Adjustment

A study carried out in 2002 examined 'the current and likely future restructuring of England's agricultural businesses over the next five years, to consider their economic and environmental impact, and to identify implications for policy' (Lobley et al, 2002: 1). It largely covered the recombination or reallocation of resources (mainly land, labour and capital) to economic activity both inside and outside the realms of the farm. Three main changes were discovered, those of expansion or contraction, diversification, and the reduction of role from full-time to part-time farmers, all of which are classed as 'traditional' methods of restructuring.

Drivers of restructuring can be global, regional or local, or internal farm household (ie succession or retirement) and according to Lobley et al (2002), the largest group of diversifiers at this point in time were 'agricultural integrators' who entered into farming-related activities such as whole-farm contracting, agricultural contracting, haulage or agriculture-related business consultancy (ibid: 6). They discovered that farmers who professed an intention to leave and had no successor were less likely to actually sell up than to let the land out or have it contract-farmed (Lobley et al 2002), acknowledging that 'uptake into agri-environment schemes might be affected by increased amounts of land under contract farming agreements' (ibid: 7). The report also predicted that the indirect effect of restructuring on jobs in agriculture-related industries were 'likely to be greater than the loss of jobs on farms themselves' (ibid: 7), although significant regional variation was shown to exist with regards to the impact of restructuring. This variation is attributed to the relative weakness of the local economy and 'the vulnerability of their environmental assets' (ibid: 7). In addition to this, levels of restructuring also depend greatly on farm type.

What this report ultimately demonstrates is that the turn of the millennia provides a very different snapshot of farm labour in the UK than that taken at the end of the nineteenth century. Losses in farm workers overall was on the decrease (although still showing a

decline of 8% over the five years prior to the reports publication) whilst the use of contractors was increasing.

The need for policymakers to 'engage with a more diverse set of stakeholders, not all of whom will be farmers or people occupying holdings in order to generate income' is perceived as a likely outcome of structural adjustment by Potter and Lobley (2004), and is of particular relevance to this study.

Parry et al (2005) suggest agricultural restructuring might have led to more stress for farmers and farm workers due to the 'long hours culture', exacerbated by a reduced workforce.

2.3 Technology and Automation of Work

Technological change has altered farm work in varying ways depending on the type of farming undertaken. For example, in terms of arable agriculture, much more can now be achieved with fewer workers, although, according to Newby (1979) 'the fundamental sequential organisation of production remains undisturbed' (ibid: 127). The introduction of machinery also led to a decrease in the division of labour as fewer men were employed to do a greater variety of tasks which, Newby states, resulted in the farm worker becoming 'more autonomous' (1979: 127). This pattern is being reversed in the contemporary climate due to the increasing use of contractors. Despite farming having always been associated with drastically low pay, there have always existed 'elite' workers who earn much more than the average rate of pay, such as highly skilled and trained stockmen. These made up approximately 15% of the agricultural labour force in the late 1970s, according to Newby (1979). He suggests that the stockman in the late 1970s approximated 'more to a farm technician' than the old image of the 'farm labourer' due to the increased scientific knowledge and veterinary skills required by their role. Milking has become largely mechanised, cutting labour requirements drastically, whilst the life of a shepherd in some areas of Britain has changed in less drastic ways, such as with the use of quad bikes and scanners in lambing season (Rebanks 2015). The rapid introduction of new technologies into agriculture introduces a variety of challenges to the picture. For the farmer, the supply of skilled labour competent in using new technology is increasing as a problem. According to the Future of Farming Report (Defra 2013), 'farming as an outdoor, practical, small-scale business relies on versatile, resourceful and skilled staff [and] one of the main concerns voiced by farm employers is that they have found it difficult to recruit such staff in recent years' (ibid: 8). Whilst current workers face the challenge of frequently upskilling in order to keep pace with requirements in the market.

A recent report examined the susceptibility of all jobs to computerisation, producing a percentage estimate of the likelihood each job is to be taken over by technology (Frey and Osborne 2017). According to their estimates based on detailed job data from the O*NET employment database in the United States, for farmers in the United States, there is a 0.47% probability that their jobs will become automated, whilst 'miscellaneous agricultural workers are at a 0.87% risk. These findings were then adapted to the UK by using corresponding occupation classifications from the Office for National Statistics (BBC 2015). The farm workers presented the same risk of it being quite likely that their job would be automated at a likelihood of 87%, whilst farmers fared slightly better in the UK than their US contemporaries, with their risk lowering to 76%.

Scott (1998) fears that the universal use of new technology will ultimately be detrimental to the land. He relates his concept of legibility to his understanding of mētis; 'a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment' (ibid: 313). In attempting to structure society, in this case the farming community, and render it legible for whatever purposes, the mētis of that society is potentially destroyed to its own detriment as the universal knowledge, or 'techne' is encouraged in pursuit of high-modernism. He fears that where 'local soils, local landscape, local labour, local implements, and local weather' are considered irrelevant to particular projects, failure will almost always ensue (ibid: 271).

The effect of technology on skill requirements in the agricultural workplace is examined further in chapter three.

2.4 Conclusion

The farm worker, in all of his or her guises, has played a fundamental role in the sustainability of the industry since farming, as a culture, first formed. This chapter situates the traditional farm worker within the history of agriculture, and highlights challenges previously faced by the industry and government in the face of labour shortages, as well as their responses and subsequent sources of labour. It also introduces the intermittent agricultural worker as a necessary component to be considered both as part of the social reproduction of agriculture as well as a unit of consideration in data collection. The situation of the farm labour contributor in the work place has, historically, been transformed by opportunities and constraints at local and national levels, whilst data collation regarding the farm labour contributor has been consistently clumsy and misrepresentative. And as numbers of traditional workers have

declined, so too has associated research examining any aspect of the lifescape of the farm worker.

The next chapter explores the contemporary flexible labour market in more detail, and elaborates on the importance of the farm labour contributor to the sustainable intensification agenda.

Chapter Three: The Contemporary Farm Labour Contributor and the Sustainable Intensification Agenda

> *'The introduction of new agricultural technologies can have complex social and economic consequences both for people in the immediate farming area and more distant groups through markets for land, labour and physical inputs and outputs [...] If new technologies are introduced without consideration of infrastructure, institutions, markets, cultures and practices, success can be short-lived or there can be serious unintended consequences'* (Baulcombe et al 2009: 44)

3.0 Introduction

The sustainable intensification of agriculture is considered one of the most significant means by which to achieve the wider food security agenda, both nationally and globally, where an anticipated 9 billion people will require feeding by 2050, partly through an increase in food production (Baulcombe et al 2009). Despite this, Fish et al (2013) suggest that 'we know very little about how these agendas are being understood by farming publics' (ibid: 40). Responses to this gap in knowledge largely assume the farmer as sufficiently representative of those 'publics', which perpetuates the neglect of other actors who may be responsible for the implementation of approaches associated with achieving the goal of sustainable intensification. Efforts to attain an effective sustainable intensification of agriculture depend upon new technologies and innovations. Baulcombe et al (2009) state that 'for technologies to be successful and sustainable, they need to fit with local economic contexts', they specify how 'farmers' own expertise needs to feed into processes of research and innovation' and most significantly for the purposes of this thesis, that 'systems for extending and translating knowledge into changed practices need to be improved' (ibid: 39).

Instead of recognising only the farmers' knowledge as a crucial asset in the current bid for a sustainable future in the context of the food security agenda, this thesis endeavours to identify the wider 'farming publics' who are in possession of skills, knowledges, attitudes and perceptions that might affect or be affected by the maintenance of old, or the introduction of new farming practices. In order to do this, the identification of who these actors are is imperative. This chapter introduces the concept of the flexible labour market in contemporary agriculture, widening the net from the restrictive term of farm worker, which connotes traditional, hired workers only, to include all cohorts who contribute to labour on the land. These individuals will be referred to collectively as *farm labour contributors (*FLCs). The farm labour contributor will be linked to the pursuit of sustainable intensification via the consideration of their

role as a resource for work, as well as for social and cultural capital in relation to the farmer, and in considering their relationship with other significant agents within the agricultural landscape.

3.1 The Flexible Labour Market

> *'The farm worker has become a stranger in his own land [as] whole areas of Britain are worked only by farmers and contractors' (Howkins 2007:8)*

The decline of the agricultural labour force has become a familiar trope in both early and contemporary discussions around British agriculture, and although this decline is inarguable, both governmental departments, in their statistical analyses of all elements of agriculture in the country, as well as academic research, largely ignore the existence of the flexible labour market that has become increasingly prevalent in the farming world in Britain today. As a result, accuracy of data concerning labour use in agriculture has been extremely limited (Ball 1987b) and the research potential of the 'two-dimensional' aspect of the flexible labour market in agriculture is often overlooked (Chung 2006), that of the perspective and role of the employee as well as that of the employer.

The rise in flexibility

The 1980s bore witness to an increase in debates around flexibility in the labour market. These occurred in response to both economic crises and structural issues prompting rapid structural adjustment (Hakim 1990), although 'early on it was agreed that almost none of the 'new' forms of work are in fact new' (ibid: 157). Hakim suggests flexible forms of labour arose more generally in the 1950s.

Agriculture is no stranger to the model of a mixed workforce, with early nineteenth century farmers often relying on the more permanent farm servants as well as temporary gang labour, a system that was to predominate in this and other sectors in the mid-nineteenth century until the introduction of the Gang Act in 1867 encouraged a gradual return to more permanent employees in the early twentieth century (Brass 2004). However, both types of labour then were considered 'unfree', unfortunately a term still applicable to some groups of people who have been employed under gang labour since its resurgence in agriculture in the 1980s. Gang labour as a form of 'flexibility' was a one-sided strategy employed by agricultural producers to counteract the effects of the repeal of the Corn Laws, falling food prices, and other socio-economic changes occurring at the time (Brass 2004).

A crude yet effective historical example of labour market flexibility in agriculture, gang labour was and still is a typical arrangement used by the employer to respond and

adjust to fluctuations in the market, as well as to the seasons. Since its re-emergence in the 1980s, gang labour has continued to supply a significant proportion of casual labour, often migrant workers, to the agriculture and horticulture sector, much in the same vein whereby the majority of gang workers belong to the precariat; the precarious proletariat (Standing 2011). Due to their lack of employment options, the typical seasonal worker might work in the farming industry 'involuntarily' rather than voluntarily (Ball 1988) and most migrant, casual workers in agriculture and horticulture are still very much part of the secondary labour market.

However, since the mid-1990s; a significant period that saw fluctuations in exchange rates, a fall in world prices and a continuation of reforms in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the survival of many farms has become increasingly reliant on family labour (Lobley and Potter 2004) resulting in a continuation in the decline of permanent workers that began in the 1850s, as described earlier. Often not sufficient for seasonal peak labour requirements however, family labour often requires augmenting with arrangements involving the services of agricultural contractors. Thus, a new profile of worker has emerged which not only challenges the more traditional idea of the farm worker (Newby 1977), but through the contestation of traditional ideas around temporary labour, also forces a re-examination of the idea that labour flexibility always adheres to the needs of the firm. Instead, some of these new workers statuses also afford the benefits of flexibility to the worker, 'as companies adapt to business cycles through labour market flexibility, individuals can adapt to their life cycles through flexibility' (Chung 2006: 2).

Subsequently, 'flexible labour' is both an overly generic, ambiguous, and often multi-interpreted term. It can be examined from the perspective of the employer, as well as from that of the worker, and is, more often than not, associated with lower pay, insecurity and more regular unemployment (Arnold and Bongiovi 2012) when in fact, the opposite can be the case. As Hakim identified in 1990, 'there is no distinctively and uniquely sociological perspective on the flexibility debate' (ibid: 158).

3.1.1 Atkinson's Model of the Flexible Firm

Most notably associated with Atkinson (1984) and the Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS), the flexible labour market was identified as having arisen from firms finding themselves 'under pressure to find more flexible ways of manning which take account of […] new market realities' (ibid: 29), mainly market stagnation, job loss, uncertainty, technological change, and working time. Firms sought labour that was able to respond quickly, easily and cheaply to fluctuations in labour requirements, yet at a level that matched job requirements precisely. IMS research identified three types of flexibility via

which employers sought to achieve these aims: functional flexibility, numerical flexibility and financial flexibility.

Functional flexibility refers to the range of tasks employees are capable of performing, allowing internal mobility within an organisation through staff who are multi-skilled rather than specialised in a small number of tasks. Functional flexibility can also be achieved via the use of external labour sources who offer skills missing from the internal workforce. According to Atkinson, as 'production methods change, functional flexibility implies that the same labour force changes with them, in both the short and medium term' (Atkinson 1984: 29).

Described as the ability to quickly and easily increase or decrease headcount in response to changes in the demand for labour, numerical flexibility focuses on ensuring that numbers employed at all times exactly correlates to numbers required (Atkinson 1984). Both hiring and firing practices, the use of overtime, as well as the use of contingent labour, enable this type of flexibility within a firm.

And finally, financial flexibility according to Atkinson, is sought 'so that pay and other employment costs reflect the state of supply and demand in the external labour market' (ibid: 29). Shifting to plant-level bargaining, widening differentials between skilled and unskilled workers and shifting to different systems of pay are methods employed to achieve financial flexibility.

3.1.2 The Core and the Periphery

Mangum et al (1985) view the flexibility strategy in terms of attachment and commitment. He describes the process as an employer seeking to 'attach some workers to their firms while detaching themselves from continuing obligations to other workers' (ibid: 599). By selecting and investing in a core group of employees with the required knowledge and skills, the attachment of those employees to the firm is cemented, thus encouraging their commitment. Conversely, Mangum believes the same employer might avoid attachments to peripheral workers, 'even at the cost of high turnover' (ibid: 559). In the face of fluctuating product demand, as is the case in agriculture, meeting these demands using only a core base of staff is potentially expensive and would result in either overstaffing or excessive workload. Within agriculture, and set against this model, the core group is generally shrinking, whilst peripheral groups are growing.

According to Sugarman (1978), core members receive benefits associated with the primary labour market, including job security, potential for career progression, fringe benefits and other incentives. Sugarman's perception of 'flexible' labour however,

placed temporary, intermittent, part-time or seasonal labour in the secondary labour market, associated with less job security, and fewer fringe benefits and career progression prospects. The 'core' and the 'periphery' are key components of the IMS model (Figure 3.1). Core workers carry out key tasks specific to the firm, are protected from market fluctuations, and operate with functional flexibility, whilst peripheral workers, are more exposed to market fluctuations and provide more of the numerical flexibility element to the employer.

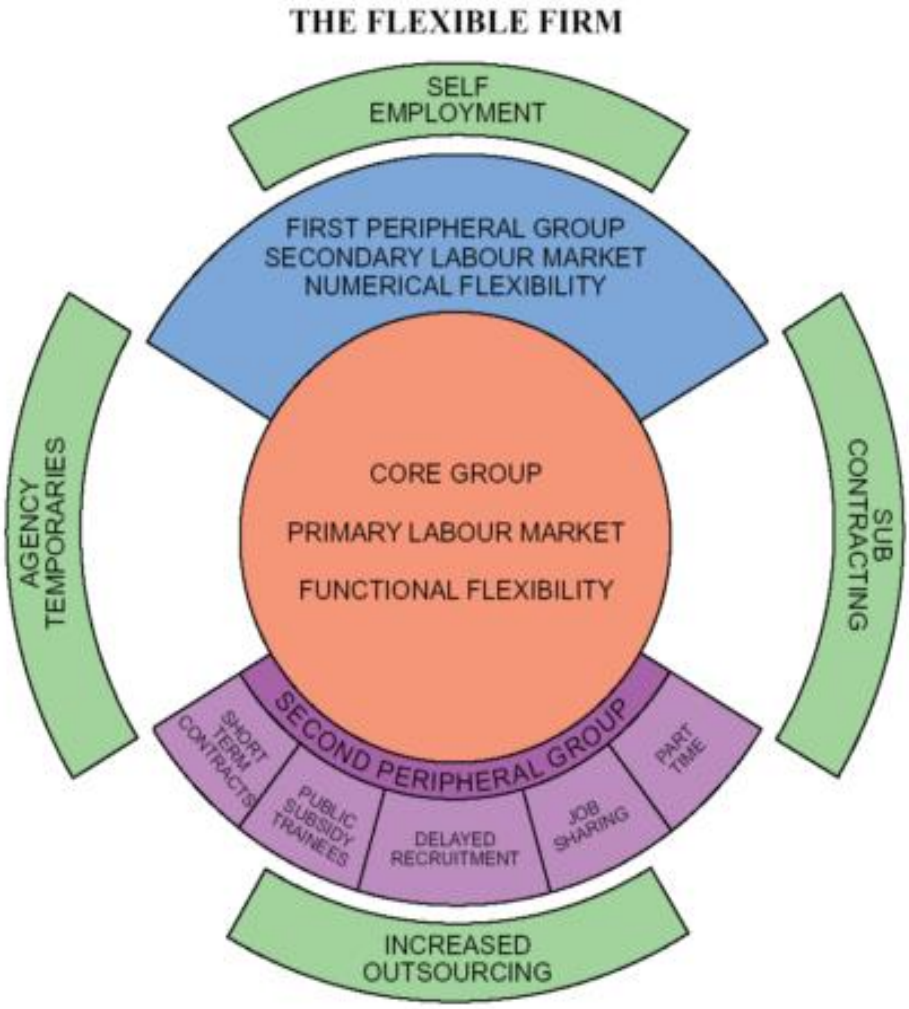

Figure 3.1: Model of the flexible firm (*Source*: Atkinson 1984)

Atkinson differentiated between two peripheral groups, the first peripheral group representing low-skilled, temporary workers with little job security and arriving from what he describes as the 'external labour market', usually encouraging high turnover (ibid: 31). The second peripheral group represents workers on short-term contracts, part-timers or those working as part of a job share or as government-funded trainees.

External to both the core and the peripheral group, according to the IMS model, exist other groups which include sub-contractors, self-employed workers and agency staff

offering services which are ‘not at all specific to the firm’ (Errington and Gasson 1996: 129).

This movement towards flexibility is also referred to as casualisation, the ‘deliberate restructuring of the workforce to economise on labour costs and avoid such long-term commitments’ (Errington and Gasson 1996: 130).

3.1.3 Contingent Labour

The flexible firm thus consists of functional flexibility provided by core staff, and numerical flexibility offered by more peripheral staff. But the term peripheral is becoming somewhat outdated in the 21st century, especially in organisations where this type of worker actually makes up the bulk of the labour. Therefore, a more applicable term might be contingent labour. This can be applied to outsourced, casual, contracted, temporary, intermittent, flexible, itinerant, and self-employed labour (Kunda et al 2002: 235). More specifically, Cohany et al (1998) identify contingent labour as:

> ‘Under its most liberal, restricted definition, the BLS[3] defines the contingent work force as the sum of (a) all wage and salary workers who "do not expect their employment to last," except for those who planned to leave their jobs for personal reasons, (b) all "self-employed (both the incorporated and the unincorporated) and independent contractors who expect to be and had been in their present assignment for less than 1 year," and (c) temporary help and contract workers who "expected to work for the customers to whom they were assigned for one year or less’ (ibid:43-44)

Contingent workers belong to the external labour market, and are ‘workers whose services can be called upon without their becoming employees’ (Mangum et al 1985: 604). However, from here, the categorisation of contingent workers enters ambiguous territory as all workers falling into the contingent labour category do not necessarily have much else in common with each other (Cappelli and Keller 2013).

Kunda et al (2002) identified two key perspectives on contingent labour and its implications; the ‘employment relations’ perspective and the ‘free agent’ perspective. The employment relations researchers concentrate on the experience of employment, the welfare of employees, and as an extension of this, societal welfare as a whole (Cappelli et al (1997). Rather than perceive contingent labour as supporting the employment system, Kunda states that employment relations theorists regard contingent labour as a ‘threat to the stability of the system’ (Kunda et al 2002: 236-237)

[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics, USA

and frame this threat within the dual-labour market theory which splits the labour sector between primary and secondary. The 'primary' market represents that labour market which provides stability, career progression, job security, good wages and attractive benefits, whilst the secondary market offers little stability, lower wages and fewer benefits, and is home to a greater number of members from minority groups. Secondary labour markets are most commonly associated with peripheral workers thus the growth of contingent work represents 'the spread of secondary labour dynamics into the economy's core' and so is regarded, by employment relationists, as a social problem (Kunda et al 2002 236-237). Specific concerns include the well-being of workers and their families (Osterman 1988), an increase in the need for government assistance (Dillon 1987), and the potential to undermine unions (Rifkin 1995). Kunda et al (2002) question whether the employment relations view of contingent work as exploitative and involuntary validly describes all types of contingent work. They suggest this type of research and theorising loses 'sight of the highly skilled sector in their analysis because they rely on aggregate data, which is weighted towards the responses of traditional, temporary employees' (ibid: 237). As hinted at earlier, substantial differences exist between the experiences of low- and high-skilled contingent work, affecting levels of security, remuneration, and types of work, so the employment relations perspective 'risks confounding the effects of contracting with the correlates of low-skill occupations' (ibid: 237).

The Free Agent perspective provides a significant contrast in that they concentrate almost completely on the highly skilled workers, paralleling agency theory in that they both stress the benefits of the free labour market (Kunda et al 2002). They also recognise the transition in the employment structure but believe it to be a positive development to the 'outmoded inventions of the industrial revolution that were designed to meet the needs of large organisations' (ibid: 237). Advocates of the free agent perspective, such as Pink (1998) and Darby (1997) perceive economic individualism as a method by which workers can 'regain independence and recapture from employers a deserved portion of their surplus value', and as such, a voluntary, choice-driven decision that is liberating rather than isolating from the traditional workplace and actually offers the opposite benefits than those previously discussed associated with secondary employment (ibid: 238).

The vast differences between these two perspectives demonstrate that there can currently be no all-encompassing theory regarding contingent labour, as 'the full diversity of the phenomena' cannot be captured by either (Kunda (2002: 238). As contingent labour comes to encapsulate a wider variety of work, and with a lack of agreement over what arrangements are classifiable as 'contingent labour', the lack of a

clear definition means that any clear theory is still far off (Cappelli and Keller 2013). Perceptions around security in both the primary and secondary labour market have less meaning now that layoffs and re-structurings are common occurrences in many regular workplaces and, accordingly, the concept of security/insecurity is no longer viable as a useful criterion in work classification. The literature belonging to both theories described by Kunda also lacks empirical studies of highly-skilled contractors while at the same time, making narrow assumptions regarding how workers make sense of themselves and their work. Employment relations scholars rely on the idea of a worker's involvement in an organisation, whilst free agency theorists believe workers define themselves by 'their skills and the role they play in an entrepreneurial labour market' (Kunda 2002: 238).

Time for a new classification?

Cappelli and Keller (2013) state that 'alternatives to full-time regular employment are now so prominent that all research based on the workplace need to consider them' (ibid: 593). They believe that it is necessary to have a classification system identifying what is important about each work arrangement and how they differ from one another, rather than trying to lump them all under the one heading of 'contingent labour'. This would avoid both ignoring highly skilled contingent labour by constantly concentrating on the low-skilled workers, as well as the correlation of all contractors with some kind of contingent elite (Barley and Kunda 2006).

Mangum et al (1985) recognise that the most obvious limitation of their research into the 'temporary help industry' was the lack of empirical work conducted with the workers themselves, acknowledging the necessity of a parallel study of the temporary worker to complement their study. Peel and Boxall (2005) call for a greater emphasis on the perspective of the worker within the employment relationship, highlighting the dominance of the perspective of the firm in most labour market research. Employment mutuality is of key importance in an age of growing labour casualisation as is 'matching the needs of the worker with the needs of the business' (ibid: 1676).

3.2 Agriculture and the Flexible Labour Market

Within the agriculture industry, aside from studies focussing on migrant workers, little research exists on the 'people aspects' of the flexible labour force. Ball (1987) led the way with his deeper examination of post-war intermittent labour forms in agriculture in the UK. He recognised that 'the conception of the farm labour force as overwhelmingly full-time, regular (hired or family), and living on or near the place of work, [was] no longer accurate' (ibid: 133) and that regular labour forms so long associated with the British firm were being rapidly replaced by part-time, part-year labour, usually based off

of the farm, and sometimes from a separate locality entirely. More importantly, Ball identified that 'never have important segments of the labour force, such as directly-recruited intermittent workers (labelled as seasonal or casual workers by the MAFF June Census) or agricultural contractors been subjected to detailed attention' (Ibid: 134).Yet even in Ball's analysis, emphasis is placed upon trends in agriculture and implications for rural economies, rather than on the workers themselves.

Changes in the structure of the agricultural workforce have occurred rapidly since the mid-1980s, one of the most significant being the substitution of permanent hired employees with casual workers or contractors (Errington 1988). Errington and Gasson (1996) describe how a certain level of flexibility has always been necessary in agriculture, due to above average 'peaking' of labour requirements at different points in the agricultural annual cycle. These peaks vary according to the farming system, but depend upon time-critical events such as hay and silage-making, harvesting, calving, lambing or winter-feeding. They describe the predictability of seasonal fluctuations, for example, but state that 'the unpredictability of livestock and the weather combines with that of staff and machines to produce periodic emergencies that must also be covered by flexible labour inputs, often at very short notice' (ibid: 130). In recent times, social and economic factors have contributed to a move towards greater flexibility in farming. Primarily, it seeks to reduce production costs, utilising accessibility to numerical flexibility whilst ensuring that 'the permanent workforce is used to full capacity' (Errington and Gasson 1996: 130). A peripheral labour force is recognised by Errington and Gasson as being cheaper than core workers. The importance of increased accessibility to a peripheral workforce has also arisen from the changes in the social structure in rural areas. Errington and Gasson (1996) describe the farming population as being thinner on the ground. Where historically, a neighbour may have been turned to in times of emergency, such levels of availability are simply not there anymore. They suggest this is also the case with potential family labour, where the availability of spouses or children is reduced due to their increased employment off-farm. According to Brookfield (2008), outsourcing their labour requirements to contractors allows family famers 'the means to work larger areas without stretching their own labour resources', even though he claims that 'the quality and commitment of such labour remains inferior to that of the farm family and its' neighbours' (ibid: 120).

At face value, Atkinson's (1984) model of flexibility can be superimposed onto the traditional farming model, with family members and permanent employees representing the core; part-time, temporary, casual or seasonal labour providing the numerical flexibility on the periphery; and self-employed contractors or contracting firms bringing up the rear. Functional flexibility from within the core workforce is also required in

response to changes in technology, as the development of new skills relating to said technology becomes an essential job requirement, involving tasks which are different from those for which they were originally employed (Errington and Gasson 1996). A high degree of functional flexibility has always been prevalent in the agriculture industry as farm workers have been required to perform a plethora of tasks on a daily, monthly and seasonal basis. Contingent labour however, especially contractors, can also fulfil this role, especially for smaller businesses that are 'denied access to specialised skills' (ibid: 131). Numerical flexibility is also provided by core employees as farmers and farm workers alike do not often adhere to the forty hour week, so extra hours of work occur in the farm employment structure.

Some issues do exist with Atkinson's model of flexible labour when applied to contingent agricultural workers, especially contractors. Both general contractors and agricultural contractors defy the definition of either skilled or unskilled labour which normally define where a worker belongs on the primary-secondary labour market scale. Kunda et al (2002) describe how contractors 'apparently experience few of the vicissitudes of a secondary labour market', not being either badly trained or living either marginally or in poor conditions (ibid: 257-258). According to Mangum et al (1985), due to a high level of scarce and in demand skill, some contractors and consultants, are 'in a situation as advantageous as that of core workers who have protected seniority and tenure' (ibid: 604-605). Markedly, with regards to the placement of contingent labour in the primary or secondary labour market, Kunda et al (2002) conclude that:

> 'Contingent employment seems to have its own primary and secondary sectors, and the differences in dynamics between them are as pronounced and socially significant as the differences between permanent and contingent employment itself' (ibid: 258)

Additionally, some farms utilise only contract labour, either outside of the family unit of provision or as an entirety in the form of whole-farm contractors, thus challenging the original definition of 'core' labour within a business. An increase in whole-farm contracting has occurred in response to the restructuring of agriculture in the UK, and according to Lobley et al (2005), is 'partly explained by the reluctance on the part of many disengaging and retiring farmers to actually give up their farms' (ibid: iv). Whole-farm contractors differ from other self-employed contractors in that they manage the entire holding, as opposed to carrying out specific tasks sometimes, but not always, alongside other forms of labour. Generally, theories around flexible labour agree that core labour is usually internal and equal to primary labour and all of its benefits, whilst peripheral labour is usually external and generally associated with the secondary labour force and its lack of benefits. However, Mangum et al (1985) recognise that

many self-employed contractors should be thought of as core employees in the external labour market. This is due to factors such as financial rewards accrued by contractors, level of skill and increased job security factors, and in the case of agricultural contractors, of them often being the only form of labour on a farm. Conversely, some 'formal intermittents' might officially be identified with the core, primary labour market due to being on the payroll but might actually identify more with peripheral workers in terms of actual security and benefits (Mangum 1985). All of these factors are likely to affect commitment to a firm, motivation and productivity levels. Auer et al (2005) discovered an adverse correlation between short tenure and productivity, suggesting stable employment relationships promote greater productivity than labour market flexibility.

3.2.1 The Workforce in Agriculture

Gasson and Errington (1993) adapted the IMS model of flexible labour, tailoring it to the agricultural workforce in Britain (Table 3.1). This is more representative of numerical flexibility as opposed to the tripartite model proposed by Atkinson (1984), which also included functional and financial flexibility. For the purposes of this thesis, all actors contributing to labour on a holding will be considered part of the flexible labour force, including family workers and permanent labour. This is due to the functional flexibility required of the regular workforce alongside requirements for numerical flexibility.

Table 3.1

Possible sources of farm labour

	Unpaid Labour	**Labour which is either paid or unpaid**	**Paid Labour**
The regular workforce	Farmer	Successor(s)	Full-time worker(s)
	Spouse	Other children	Part-time worker(s)
The flexible workforce	Semi-retired parents	Children in full-time education	Contractors
		Neighbours	Seasonal/casual workers
		Kin	Advisors/consultants

Source: Adapted from Gasson and Errington (1993: 119)

3.2.2 Family Labour

In a 1974 study, Gasson pointed out that, in contrast to the farm worker, the number of farmers in England and Wales between 1851 and 1951 had actually increased slightly, and only began to decrease around 1951. Earlier statistical collation tended to exclude

farmers from the occupational heading of agricultural workers. However, more recent national census reports have included the farmer alongside spouses, relatives and hired workers within their overall figures regarding farm labour. The prominence of the farmer as farm worker is more relevant than ever now, especially in certain areas of the UK where many farms no longer hire temporary or permanent farm workers, preferring to or, more likely, having no choice but to, undertake most or all of the work themselves.

The farmer and farm family worker now provide key input into the working hours and productivity of many farms and thus any definition of farm labour should include this arrangement of workers also. Holderness describes how 'in the division of labour on farms the old distinction between farmers and labourers has become blurred since the 1950s' (1985: 122). Although many farmers have taken on a more managerial and/or entrepreneurial role, the manual, technological and administrative tasks are often spread between either just a farmer and his family, or the farming family and hired help, be it in the form of a more traditional farm worker or a contractor. Gasson and Errington (1993) produced a detailed study of The Farm Family Business, from which they discovered that as early as 1986, hired workers were only employed on 28 per cent of UK farm holdings, compared to 40 per cent 26 years earlier, resulting in 72 per cent of UK farms relying on family labour (ibid: 44). Lund et al suggested that 'more than half of the regular labour on the national farm comes from farmers and their families' (1982 in Gasson and Errington 1993: 45). Devon and Lancashire are typical, current examples of regions where farmers and their families provide the majority of the labour on an average farm (Parry et al 2005).

According to Defra (2014b) family labour still constitutes the majority of farm labour, both paid and unpaid, and farms make less use of contractors if a high level of unpaid family labour is available. Many smaller farms, especially in the arable and livestock sectors, rely on family labour and choose to do less urgent tasks themselves, especially if the tools or machinery required are not particularly complex. This is even the case if completing the task proves to be slower than it might have been if using outsourced labour.

3.2.3 The Regular Workforce

Between 2005 and 2015, numbers of regular, hired farm workers have remained relatively stable in England, witnessing a slight decrease in full-time workers and no change in numbers of part-time workers (Defra 2015). According to Defra's figures (2014a), the number of regular full-time workers on commercial agricultural holdings in June 2014 in the whole of the UK totalled 64,000, and regular part-time workers

totalled 40,000. Although a small proportion of the workforce as a whole, these numbers are significant as the future of farming in the UK comes under the lens, and thus the talent, skills and labour available to farms during what some consider a time of 'crisis' become more relevant than ever (Tipples and Morriss 2002).

In spite of urgent calls by organisations such as Defra (2013), and the NFU (2015) relating to the lack of available workers with the relevant skills in agriculture today, research and literature relevant to this crisis is still severely lacking. Lobley et al (2005) touch on it briefly in a longitudinal study of the wider social impacts of agricultural restructuring of agricultural businesses in six areas of the UK, stating that there was 'evidence from some of the discussion groups that labour shortages could be a problem either in terms of finding suitably skilled labour or large numbers of workers at key times' (ibid: 17). The sociological effect of labour shedding of regular workers is recognised in their research, but again, only from the perspective of the farmer:

> 'One thing I miss is dealing with the men I've had for forty years. You know, I've known them man and boy as they say and I miss that. The day to day working with the men, the people' (ibid: 34)

Any reference made to this type of worker in contemporary British literature has tended to focus on responses to the foot and mouth disease epidemic in rural populations (Mort et al 2005), farm-related stress (Parry 2005), organic-farming related labour (Morison et al 2005) or transitions in labour resulting from agricultural restructuring (Lobley et al 2005).

More in-depth studies regarding issues around labour shortages in agriculture generally seem to have been carried out outside of the UK, especially New Zealand (Tipples and Morriss 2002), where the issue has been examined under the Human Capability Framework (HCF), yet still only from the perspective of the farmer. Tipples and Morriss consider the HCF an 'holistic way to approach labour markets' (ibid: 25) as it considers three components; capacities, opportunities and matching, which 'provide a basis from which individuals may be seen as participating in a variety of social relations that affect their choices and aspirations' (ibid: 25). The HCF will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Interestingly, throughout Tipples and Morriss' study, questions concerning reasons for possible labour shortages were directed only at farmers themselves, who cited poor treatment by employers, low value placed on manual skills in the education system, and the unattractiveness of the image of agricultural work in society as possible deterrents to new talent entering the industry. Workers were not consulted in this study.

Chapter two considered multiple responses to labour shortages in agriculture at specific times between the inception of the industrial revolution and the present day. Recent governmental responses to agricultural labour witnessed the scrapping of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker (SAWs) scheme in 2013. Conceived following the Second World War, the SAWS scheme enabled non-UK workers to provide labour for a specified time on farms, usually horticultural units, in the UK. By the time it was abolished, a quota of 21,250 was in place, enabling Bulgarian and Romanian workers to fill agricultural positions all over the country (Migration Advisory Committee 2013). The scheme was scrapped, according to Defra, because 'at a time of unemployment in the UK and the European Union there should be sufficient workers from within those labour markets to meet the needs of the horticultural industry' (Home Office 2013:1).

More recently still, the government has been forced to respond to concerns expressed by the farming community regarding access to the single market in the wake of the Brexit vote in June, 2016 (House of Commons 2017). The strength of these concerns initiated a parliamentary inquiry, attracting oral evidence from four panels of witnesses in the farming industry, as well as thirty-two submissions of written evidence from a variety of stakeholders associated with farm labour (House of Commons 2017). Of these thirty-two submissions, a submission by the author is included (Nye et al 2017). The House of Commons (2017) report acknowledges that difficulties in recruiting labour to 'harvest and process' produce have been in existence 'for some time', yet relates this largely to 'the dependence of the sectors on migrant workers' rather than examining the labour market as a whole (ibid: 3). At the same time, the report recognises that 'the statistics used by the Government are unable to provide a proper indication of agriculture's labour needs' which has resulted in a very present danger of labour shortages 'becoming a crisis if urgent measures are not taken to fill the gaps in labour supply' (ibid: 6).

3.2.4 Seasonal/Casual Workers

Most of the literature regarding seasonal workers in British agriculture appears to adopt the employment relations perspective. Vorley (2003 in Geddes and Scott 2011:194) 'characterises contemporary food production as involving two different 'rural worlds'. With power and control draining into the large and transnational retail end of the food system and away from food producers over the past 30 years'. As a result, there has been a growth in social inequalities, and employment associated with agriculture, especially the menial tasks within horticulture, has become even less desirable than it was historically. Wages, relatively, are even lower. And according to Geddes and Scott (2011), where in the past, farm and processing factory workers were usually in direct contact at some level with their employer (creating relationships based on deference),

many workers are now several steps away due to sub-contractual employment and are thus afforded less opportunity to actively participate in improving their conditions. Many farms in the UK have become ever more dependent upon migrant workers who will work for a very low wage. Therefore, Geddes and Scott (2011) ascertain that numerous farms now operate on a dual-labour market system, with a small core of permanent staff, augmented by a fluctuating and temporary workforce. This latter workforce forms the 'secondary labour market' and according to Geddes and Scott 'it is here where the least desirable and most insecure forms of employment are concentrated'. Lincolnshire is particularly renowned for its large-scale employment of migrant workers in its farming labour force.

However, this perspective seems to underestimate the wage differentials between unskilled and skilled farm workers, the latter being able to command higher wages, and seemingly refers only to the relationship between the gang master and the migrant worker than other workers who might contribute to seasonal labour, such as students, WWOOFERS (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms – a volunteering scheme for workers in exchange for room and board), interns or apprentices.

Casual workers will be considered in this thesis, but in relation to all other workers providing labour to the holdings included in the case studies, as opposed to in isolation.

3.2.5 Contractors

Barley and Kunda (2006) provide one of the few available in-depth analyses of the world of the contractor, albeit technical rather than agricultural, and in the US rather than the UK. With the objective of documenting the social dynamics of contingent labour, by acknowledging contemporary transitions in employment relations, they sought to produce 'a detailed, balanced and accurate depiction of how contractors structured and interpreted their experience and how the lives they led were different to the ones they left behind' (ibid: 45). In the breaking of traditional boundaries of employment, Barley and Kunda discovered in the contractors what they termed 'a group of social pioneers' (ibid: 45) who operated in a 'bazaar […] without clear spatial and temporal boundaries' (ibid: 48).

A further study which considered the structure of contractual employment arrangements from both the point of view of the contractor as well as the employer was carried out by Peel and Boxall (2005), using contrasting industry and occupational contexts. Both studies recognise that economic factors only go so far in the decision-making process of both organisations and individuals who choose to either contract or become contractors. With regards to the former, the importance of cost is a given, but 'an exclusive focus on economic efficiency cannot be expected to explain human

behaviour satisfactorily, particularly the psychological and sociological dynamics of complex relationships' (ibid: 1677). Equally, regarding the contractor, 'the choice that workers make will be constrained by an array of forces both external to and within the individual' (ibid: 1681).

3.2.6 Contractors in farming

Peel and Boxall (2005) define a contractor as a worker who is 'operating as a business in their own right, who are not employing others' (ibid: 1676). This definition is not fully applicable to agricultural contracting due to many businesses requiring multiple machines to be operating at peak times of the year to meet the seasonal demands of their customers. For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, businesses operating as contractors who do or do not employ others will be considered a contractor.

Similarly to Kunda et al (2002), this thesis seeks to compare how agricultural contractors compare with traditional employees, both permanent and contingent, and examine how they all make sense of their situation alongside each other.

Defra (2014b) discovered that less than a quarter of labour requirements on all farm types are made up of contract labour, and that associated costs are still small compared to others, such as machinery costs. A large proportion of farms also gain income from contracting, but still at a relatively low level, usually under 10% of their farm business output. In spite of diversifying into contracting, many farms who increase their income from contracting still employ other contractors for work on their holding. In fact, results discovered a relationship between farms carrying out contracting and those using contract labour on their own farm, with 31% of those who contract also using contractors, compared to 29% of those who do not contract. Cereals was the only farm process where the converse was true.

Igata et al (2008) identify the UK as being the 'most developed country in Europe as regards agricultural contracting' (ibid: 29), and identify farm size, labour shortages, ownership of new technologies and cultural factors as variables which play important factors in decision-making processes around contracting.

Farm size

Patterns emerging from the data (Defra 2014b) demonstrate that the use of contractors tends to increase with the size of the farm, again apart from cereal farms where the smaller farms tend to have a higher usage, and the Farm Business Survey between 2003 and 2012 demonstrates little change in contractor usage over the ten year period (Defra 2014b). This is contrary to the findings of Igata et al (2008) who correlate higher contractor use with smaller farms. However, some of their data was taken from Ball's

work (1987) which studied 200 farms in the Midlands and north Wales, as opposed to the Defra's (2014b) study which looked at England as a whole. Disparities might also depend upon how farms size is measured by different parties.

Labour shortages/Ownership of machinery

The key role performed by contractors in agriculture corresponds with that described by general contracting literature discussed earlier in the chapter. For the farmer, 'they permit the efficient and timely completion of key field operations without the need to take on extra staff or buy expensive machinery' Defra (2014b: 2). The reason for this is where a substantial difference exists between technical contractors studied by researchers such as Kunda et al (2002) and Peel and Boxall (2005), which is that contracts made with agricultural contractors more often than not involve not only labour but machinery also. According to Ball (1987a) in his study of agricultural contractors, 'the great majority of contracts involved both labour and machinery […] and relatively few were labour-only contracts' (ibid: 482).

Cultural Factors

Igata et al (2008) discovered that Japanese farmers 'think that productivity will increase by increasing the amount of manual work performed' resulting in a tendency to rely on labour-intensive agriculture and employ fewer contractors (ibid: 30). This is in contrast to the Netherlands and the UK where agriculture is more labour extensive and contracting is now widespread, enabling the continuation of cultural practices such as maintaining ownership of a farm against all the odds.

Whole-farm contractors can play an important role under these circumstances, as farmers either move towards a lesser involvement in farming or do not have a successor (Lobley et al 2002). Their prevalence is such that, 'in some respects these whole-farm contractors are becoming the 'new estate owners', the modern counterpart to the old landed estate in terms of the amount of land controlled by a single organisation' (Lobley et al 2002: 11).

The farm and the contractor

Peel and Boxall (2005) suggest that managers often assume that cost savings are attained through the use of contractors, but in interviews were 'unable to substantiate their claims with any formal evidence' (ibid: 1684). However, research carried out by Defra (2014b) examines how the use of contractors is of benefit to farms in the UK. Avoiding capital costs and access to the provision of experienced but relatively cheap labour prove to be key influencing factors, the former being particularly important for smaller farms unable to afford new technologies such as combine harvesters. Busy

periods also saw an increase in the use of contractors, especially on cereal farms over the harvest period.

Clients interviewed by Barley and Kunda (2006) were also on the hunt for technical expertise, through the hiring of contractors and, less consciously, they also sought 'peace of mind and an exemption from the hassles of managing permanent employees' (ibid: 49).

In attempts to achieve numerical flexibility through the use of contractors, Peel and Boxall (2005) warn that the functional flexibility within the firm might be lost due to the difficulty in reassigning those workers to other tasks. For this reason they concluded that 'flexibility is multidimensional and somewhat paradoxical' (ibid: 1678). Further to this, they suggest that management within a firm needs to identify where their human resource core lies in order to develop an awareness of how to both support and defend those workers.

The contractor's perspective

Motivations behind changing from a permanent employee to a self-employed worker include a 'desire for greater autonomy over one's working life' (Peel and Boxall 2005: 1680) as well as earning potential, a factor confirmed by Rainbird (1991) who found approximately fifty per cent of self-employed workers earned more than they would have if they had been performing a similar role on a waged income. However, research conducted by Peel and Boxall discovered that in spite of the increased earning potential of contractors, many of their respondents exhibited mixed feelings about the reality of this benefit. Some described it as 'marginal due to time lost between contracts, loss of benefits such as holidays and sick leave, administrative time, and the variable flow of income' (2005: 1688).

Kunda et al (2002) discovered that another motivating factor behind becoming a contractor was the hope that contracting would allow the respondent to 'focus more intently on technical work and on developing new skills' (ibid: 254). Only 29% of respondents stating this as one of their objectives actually felt that it had been achieved.

The traditional assumption is that security is offered to the permanent core workforce via the promise of continuing work availability, whereas for contractors, this is not the case. Peel and Boxall (2005) discovered that through 'continually marketing oneself and, more generally, through being proactive about one's own future,' workers could attain sufficient security (ibid: 1687). Although Barley and Kunda (2006) state that, in reality, all contractors know that at some point they would have to return to the market.

The ‘change’ factor has also unveiled a variety of attitudinal positions held by contractors. Changes in types of work, location, and people are perceived by some general contractors as offering a kind of stability, interesting variety and the potential to learn new skills. Contrastingly, having to cope with the demands of new places, situations and people was considered as ‘challenging and tiring’ by others (Peel and Boxall 2005: 1689). Not only is a continual investment in technical knowledge required, but also social skills and social capital (Barley and Kunda 2006). Some of Kunda et al’s (2002) respondents described learning as ‘an issue of survival and not simply a means of getting a job done or a route to personal satisfaction or growth’ (ibid: 254). This constant treadmill of staying one step ahead might, according to them, push some contractors back into employment.

Defra (2014b) holds the perspective that agricultural contractors ‘have an important role in meeting the organisation’s objectives relating to the competitiveness of the farming industry and protecting the environment’, specifically because of their use of modern and more efficient machinery (ibid: 2). This displays a crude understanding of the intricacies of the role played by the contractor in agriculture.

Overall, it seems that general research carried out on contractors as a cohort so far paints a largely different picture than that hoped for by research respondents at the beginning of their decision-making process to become a contractor. The desired autonomy is often quelled by the fact that ‘the contractor is still in a dependent position of large-scale capital’ (Peel and Boxall 2005: 1681) and because of the lack of security around when and where their services might be needed, long-term planning is less possible. Relationships arising between contractors and individuals were also found to be less stable as ‘there is generally no commitment to a long-term attachment between the firm and the individual (ibid: 1681). The following section unearths some aspects of the relationships stemming from within the lifescape of the contractor, and the farm labour contributor more generally, according to pre-existing literature.

3.3 Relationships, Changes and Transitions

3.3.1 Relationship with community

The meaning of community for this research is multi-faceted. Both work-related communities and location-based communities will be examined in relation to the contemporary worker, and compared to Newby’s occupational, farm-centred and encapsulated communities (Newby 1977). Whilst the extended non-location-based or ‘virtual’ community that has arisen more prominently since the advent of the internet-age will also provide a source of information regarding farm workers and their sense of community.

Work-related communities

According to Peel and Boxall (2005), the existence of a flexible labour force has a significant impact on organisational involvement, whilst Barley and Kunda (2006) identified more personal challenges arising for all workers involved. Managers sought to distinguish between permanent staff and contractors in order to assuage any claims to the prerogatives of membership to the organisation of outsourced workers, benefiting from how easy it was to dismiss contractors from the business. They found that 'employees were similarly torn between the use they made of contractors' expertise, the friendships they established with contractors, and their envy of the contractors' skills, rates and apparent freedom' (ibid: 49). Temporary respite from the labour market felt by contractors when performing work for a business is therefore 'rife with ambiguity' (ibid: 49). Opportunities to become a part of the operational and social fabric of a place of work are more limited for contractors, but on the part of the contractors themselves, this involvement was perceived in a number of ways. Some considered it freeing from becoming a part of 'organisational politics and gossip' (ibid: 1689) whilst others 'missed regular social contacts […] and the deeper involvement in organisational life that is facilitated by length of tenure' (ibid: 1689).

Being one of the only ethnographic studies devoted to documenting the experiences of technical contractors in the labour market, Kunda et al (2002) note that theories of contingent labour are currently oversimplified and often overlook the role occupational communities and communities of practice play in this particular market, as well as the notions of how these markets are structured.

They suggest that our ability to construct an effective theory around contingent workers might be affected by 'confining our conceptualisation of its social context to organisations and markets' (Kunda et al 2002: 256). Occupational communities are another means by which to understand the structuring of employment relations, along with organisations and free markets, and were found to be particularly significant to the respondents in their research, as contractors perceived themselves as professionals and introduced themselves using occupational terminology.

Barley and Kunda's (2006) more general examination of contractors in the USA discovered that contractors felt 'that no matter how appreciated, accepted, and integrated they became, they were still outsiders' (ibid: 49). Many of the contractors interviewed perceived themselves as second-class citizens which left them with an underlying sense of dissatisfaction and anxiety. According to Barley and Kunda, the prevalence of ideas around traditional models of employment governing everyday life within a business presents issues regarding where outsourced workers 'fit into the

social fabric of organisational life' (ibid: 49). It was found that some contractors struggled with distinguishing their 'rightful place', whilst the challenge for employers was to establish how to 'integrate the contractor into the flow of activities and network of relationships (ibid: 49).

Rather than be viewed as 'human resources' to be 'acquired, maintained, nurtured, and profitably deployed' (Barley and Kunda 2006: 50), from the perspective of the firm, the contractor became 'commodities to be bought, used, and discarded like any other resource' (ibid: 50). Contractors also failed to see themselves as human resources, but rather entrepreneurs needing to rely on their skills, or owners of their own human capital. Ultimately, general contractors recognised themselves as having more in common with each other than with other workers fulfilling similar tasks.

'Virtual' communities

In spite of these ambiguities around a contractors 'rightful place' stimulating negative emotions in the workplace, Barley and Kunda also identified external community-building efforts by the contractors within their own circles, 'driven less by conscious design than by contractors' efforts to solve immediate problems' (2006: 54). They witnessed the formation of support networks, meeting technical, non-technical, and even recreational requirements, and observed that although some of these were face-to-face, the majority were virtual, largely existing via the internet. Chat rooms, bulletin boards and usenet groups provided a meeting place for those interviewed, and some semblance of contractor collectives were shown as being formed by some agencies, albeit 'incipient, loose and decentralised' (ibid: 54).

3.3.2 Relationship with the Wider Rural Community

Since Newby's *The Deferential Worker* (1977), and Howkin's *The Death of Rural England* (2003), little literature exists concerning the relationship between farm workers and the non-agricultural community outside of the foot and mouth disease crisis (Mort et al 2005). This thesis will seek to examine how different types of workers believe themselves to be perceived by the wider local and national community in order to fill this gap in knowledge.

3.4 Implications of the Flexible Labour Market for the Sustainable Intensification Agenda

Jules Pretty (2002) emphasises the connectedness between people and the land, suggesting that:

> For all our human history, we have been shaped by nature, while shaping it in return. But in our industrial age, we are losing the stories, memories and language about land and nature. These disconnections matter, for the way we think about nature and wildernesses fundamentally affects what we do in our agricultural and food systems (ibid: xii)

Pretty's detailed analyses of contemporary, industrial agriculture and its transformation into a commodity suggest a disintegration of a common heritage, which has detrimentally severed our links with nature and landscape. Describing present-day farming as being 'often organised along factory lines', he suggests it has resulted in an undermined 'sense of ownership, an inclination to care, and a desire to take action for the collective good' (Pretty 2002: 2). One example offered is that of the replacement of the horse and the horseman with mechanisation. The intimacy of the horseman with not only the horses but with the farm landscape itself is lost, according to Pretty, and along with it an intimate knowledge of nature and the corresponding sense of care that results. The fear is that not only have changes in food production and consumption had a negative effect on both cultural and social systems, but also that these landscapes 'have lost many of their stories' (ibid: 17).

Burton (2004) describes the farm landscape as not being merely a place of work. Rather, he refers eloquently back to Leopold's (1939) observation sixty years earlier that 'the landscape of any farm is the owner's portrait of himself' (ibid: 263). But in the context of modern-day farming and the increasing outsourcing of labour, there are insinuations that the landscape is now too far removed from the farmer for this to still be applicable, as the farmer is no longer the default frontline worker on his/her own land (Monbiot 2015).

Lobley et al (2002) identified that increasing areas of farmland under whole-farm contract management 'could lead to lower levels of environmental management and less willingness to join agri-environmental schemes' (ibid: 16), and question whether whole-farm contracting in particular can really compensate for the ''feeling' for environmental implications/repercussions of actions that a resident farmer has' (ibid: 24). Gosling and Williams (2010) claim that 'environmentally significant action increases with affective attachments to and identification with nature and place' (ibid: 298), suggesting that detached identification with a place might corroborate Lobley et al's hypothesis.

Effective stewardship of the land, according to Berry (2015), depends not only upon the level of skill, care and grace carried out by a worker, but also the social conditions surrounding a working situation. As noted earlier, substantial differences do exist

between the social and community connections established by regular workers and outsourced workers, a factor that requires further consideration in this study.

Rather than project a negative hypothesis regarding the implications of a greater intensity of contract farming, Lobley et al (2002) also recognise that contract farmers who are suitably trained and environmentally aware might potentially make a positive contribution to the environmental quality of land managed by them. Gosling and Williams (2010) also warn that the hypothetical linkage between attachment to place and the existence of a strong stewardship and environmental ethic makes several assumptions around a land manager's beliefs regarding what is good for the land. They call for further research examining correlations between place attachment and pro-environmental behaviours in agriculture, an aspect that is explicated further in chapter four.

Perceptions of, and relationships with, the land will feed into a wider understanding of knowledge and attitudes regarding sustainable intensification held by all farm labour contributors, as it is largely through this relationship that certain types of knowledge are developed. The concept of knowledge is introduced as 'the fourth factor of production' due to the variety of capacities; skills, knowledge, attitudes and aptitudes, required in food production (Winter 1997: 343). Winter recognises the importance of networks in agricultural lifescapes, suggesting that 'the nature of the network is a determining factor in precisely what knowledge is transmitted and how' (ibid: 374).

3.5 Knowledge and Skill in the Workplace

> *'It took traditional communities often thousands of years to learn by trial and error how to love and farm within the constraints of tough environments like ours. It would be foolish to forget these lessons or allow the knowledge to fall out of use. In a future without fossil fuels, and with a changing climate, we may need those things again'* (Rebanks 2015: 228)

Rebanks (2015) alludes to the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge in the agricultural community, a knowledge otherwise referred to as know-how, common-sense, experiential (Krzywoszynska 2016), tacit knowledge (Curry and Kirwan 2014), or what Scott (1998) describes as mētis. As farms become larger and more industrialised, and as technology and machinery become more advanced, Scott anticipates an ever more formulaic approach to farming, evolving from epicentres outside of the farming communities. He refers to this formulaic, universal knowledge as 'techne'. According to Scott (1998), 'the relation between scientific knowledge and practical knowledge is […] part of a political struggle for institutional hegemony by experts and their institutions; (ibid: 311). Addicott (2016) echoes this, suggesting that

‘since informational knowledge provided by experts from the city directly controls the behaviour of farmers in farming practices, then this could lead to a much more intensive form of ‘urban dictation’ between the agricultural thinkers and doers’ (ibid: 190). Addicott attributes the development of industrial farmers becoming more dependent on advice from crop experts, academic institutions and bureaucratic bodies to the division of both labour and knowledge.

The dichotomy of contrasting knowledges in the world of farming has tended to regard them as mutually exclusive, where scientific knowledge is ‘designed to travel and networks are constructed which allow scientific facts and artefacts to span great distances’, whilst local knowledge is ‘intimately linked to local environments which cannot be easily exported’ (Clark and Murdoch 1997: 43). Clark and Murdoch identify the attitudes of scientists as ‘the key impediment to a more profound rethinking of the role of science in practice’ (ibid: 39), stipulating that science should not be considered separate from a social scientific perspective. They also recognise that by maintaining a dualism between local and universal knowledge, defining them by such attributes, these types of knowledge ‘will be “reified”, turned into a fixed, almost material “thing” whose inner qualities somehow determine its success in the world’ (ibid: 42).

More recent examinations regarding knowledge and the sustainable intensification agenda recognise a place where the two types of knowledge can meet and interact as a platform of efficiency:

> ‘The combination of community-based innovation and local knowledge with science-based approaches in AKST [Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology] holds the promise of best addressing the problems, needs and opportunities of the rural poor’ (IAASTD 2008: 2)

The implication of combining the two types of knowledge will still rely on the effective extension of the more scientific knowledge to the farm labour contributor, a goal which appears to rarely be met so far. Ingram (2008) states that ‘our understanding of the nature and extent of knowledge about [soil] held by farmers in England is poorly developed’ (ibid: 214). She highlights how concern exists as to whether the relevant skills are in place to deliver national goals for sustainable agriculture in that ‘poor knowledge coupled with a lack of experience of complex new technologies and practices has been highlighted as a constraint to more sustainable management of the soil’ (ibid: 215). Ingram (2008) reveals how 74% of advisors queried regarding farmers capacities stated that ‘lack of knowledge and skills about soil management options was important in explaining farmer’s failure to use more sustainable practices’ (ibid: 220). The different types of knowledge, crudely categorised as local and scientific, are

allocated different weight of importance by the different stakeholders, and according to Ingram et al (2010), many farmers perceive their knowledge to be of a less tangible nature, dependent instead upon intuition or being in tune with their land. That experiential knowledge might predominate in the mind of the farmer, overriding universal knowledge stemming from scientific research, has caused some to suggest that due to new machinery, technologies, and utilisation of other farm labour, namely the agricultural contractor, this type of knowledge is compromised:

> 'In the days with horse and plough they [farmers] knew it intimately and couldn't do much damage, now with huge machinery they can do a lot of damage very quickly before they have gained the experience. Even the most in tune farmers can make those mistakes on a big scale' (Independent Agronomist in Ingram 2008: 223)

> 'There is universal agreement amongst them that cultivation is a very skilled activity, with important decisions to be made about the timing, and the interval between subsequent successive cultivations, as well as the choice of machine. Poor cultivation decisions and practices are regarded by the majority of advisors as the main reason for soil structural degradation including compaction and surface capping which lead to erosion' (Ingram 2008: 223)

Studies on knowledge in farming have largely centred on that of the farmer or the advisor as the principal agent, often attempting to balance an understanding of the two in contrast (Ingram et al 2010) or harmony with one another (Winter 1997); scientific knowledge versus local; know-how versus know-why . The knowledge belonging to more traditional hired workers or agricultural contractors, the two other principal cohorts working 'frontline' on the land, is largely discounted, and workshops and stakeholder events aiming to link 'farming publics' to new knowledge tend to largely bypass them altogether. By identifying who the frontline workers are on farms in the South West of England, examining what their situation is at their place of work, understanding how they relate to other actors in their lifescapes, and developing a more rounded picture of where they see themselves in relation to the future of food production provide key aims of this thesis.

3.6 Conclusion

In spite of the obvious benefits to the employer and to some types of worker, of the outsourcing of day to day tasks, and the fact that it has largely become a 'phenomenon throughout the world' (Igata et al 2008: 29), according to Igata, 'the significance of agricultural outsourcing' still varies between regions and countries. His comparison of small, diversified farms in the Netherlands with those of Japanese farms demonstrate

that culture also plays a significant role, and has in some cases, such as Japan, resulted in a 'weakly developed market for agricultural services' (2008: 29).

Results from studies on general contracting to date demonstrate that some 'temporary workers have negotiated the external obstacles to gaining a foothold in the internal labour market' (Mangum et al 1985: 609), although this does not necessarily mean stability is secured, and movement between the periphery and the core might still be impeded. But what the temporary help industry, as Mangum at al refer to it, is enabling is a 'rationalisation' of the flexible labour market, providing potential for a little more security and upward mobility to those working in the secondary labour market who might normally remain on the periphery of the employment model.

Rather than revert to the 'dual labour' theory and its connotations towards a primary and secondary sector distinction being based upon levels of pay and skills, it might be more suitable to utilise the term 'labour market segmentation'. The term 'dual' suggests a division exists between two parallel markets, whilst segmentation implies the existence of two or more labour markets that are distinct from one another.

Kalleberg (2001) notes that:

> 'observers in all industrial countries regularly emphasize the importance of human resource management practices that enable organizations to adapt quickly to rapid developments in technology, greater diversity in labour markets, growing international and price competition in product markets, and corporate financial restructuring in capital markets' (ibid: 479)

With more attention being paid to work organisation, and human resource management practices creating objectives focussing on employee skills, incentives and responsibilities, Kalleberg suggests we have a reached a 'new paradigm' that is replacing unions and collective bargaining as the core innovative force in industrial relations research' (ibid: 481). Barley and Kunda regard this change similarly, suggesting that 'a shift in the nature of employment is precisely the kind of change that historians use to identify a society's movement from one economic era to another' (ibid: 62).

With regards to workers and the community, Barley and Kunda (2006) attribute the contractor's well-being partly to their reputation in a community but also to the recurring needs of the customer. They recognise professional and occupational ties, technology-related skills, industry involvement, physical proximity, class, ethnic identity and friendship as contributing to social networks in agricultural employment.

The importance of agricultural contracting to the restructuring of English agriculture is something that requires continual monitoring, according to Defra (2014b), especially due to gaps which remain in knowledge regarding this cohort.

By examining the world of the contractor from their own point of view, Kunda et al (2002) concluded that the life of the contractor is 'neither as grim as the proponents of the employment relations' perspective fear, nor as rosy as the advocates of free agency promise' (ibid: 255). The social and economic factors associated with temporary, secondary labour were often not felt by contractors who, rather than experience lower pay and less job security, often proclaimed higher wages and a minority, as even more secure than they had been whilst in traditional employment. At the same, time, they acknowledged that there were risks and economic pressures were still there in the background. However, many viewed 'organisational employment through the lens of a professional identity and found it wanting' (ibid: 255), instead seeking greater independence and control over their working environment, most of whom 'claimed to have found it' (ibid: 255). Peel and Boxall found that 'the choice between employment and contracting was multidimensional, not easily labelled as good or bad, and subject to a range of personal interpretations' (ibid: 1690).

As the goals of the agricultural industry move from an era of productivism to post-productivism, and a greater number of actors demand attention outside of the 'business as usual' pattern of basic intensification, the flexible labour market in agriculture and the role of each cohort of farm labour contributors requires immediate attention. Sustainable intensification not only incorporates considerations about soil, but also water, crop nutrition, temperature, ozone, pests, diseases and weed competition, energy and greenhouse gas emissions and the 'maintenance of genetic resources and germplasm availability' (Baulcombe et al 2009: 18). However, the same report cites the constraints that limit global food production as chiefly soil fertility, water availability, weeds, diseases and pests, all aspects of farming over which all farm labour contributors have a potential influence.

Knowledge and the attitudes and perceptions regarding sustainable intensification, is crucial to the wider sustainable intensification debate. Developing an understanding of where knowledge lies within the web of the farm labour contributor's world offers the final turn of the key in realising their actual place within the sustainability agenda.

Chapter Four: Towards a Theoretical Framework

4.0 Introduction

The outcomes of a mixed-methods approach are multi-faceted and therefore require the application of combined theories and frameworks upon which to build a competent analysis of both **the lived experience** of the farm worker, and **the wider implications of how this links to opportunities, capacities and choices** affecting both employers and employees in the agricultural labour market. The recognition of the flexibility of the labour market provides a significant step towards the latter, but only in unpicking key aspects of agricultural labour beyond simply that of human capital, can the nexus of social, economic and policy aspects be fully considered. This chapter begins by identifying where the selected theoretical approach lies in relation to wider organisational theories of work. It goes on to introduce the concept of the lifescape as a conceptual model upon which to build an understanding of the lived experience of those actors contributing to agricultural labour and discusses the pertinence of recognising why it is important to incorporate all aspects of the lifescape into this analysis in order to understand the farm labour contributor. This part of the analysis draws on Actor-Network Theory (Law and Hassard 1999) which recognizes the agency of non-human entities on an outcome or relationship.

And finally, the third strand of this chapter brings in the Human Capability Framework as a tool to examine and negotiate particular constraints to the balance of the agricultural labour market, especially in terms of labour shortages. It makes the link between the concept of the lifescape and the Human Capability Framework to stimulate a fresh approach to agricultural labour and how related objectives of sustainable intensification might be met.

4.1 Sociology of the Agricultural Worker Perspectives

The predicament of the agricultural worker has been approached from myriad angles, most significantly via theories of work organisation or from a sociological perspective, strands of which are by no means mutually exclusive.

4.1.1 Actor Network Theory Amongst Organisational Theories of Work

Grint (2005) identifies how organizational theories of work can be mapped along two axis, the determinist-interpretativist axis and the technocrat-critical axis (Figure 4.1). Early studies of farm workers tend to cluster towards determinist theories, edging

towards the technocratic. Newby, as discussed in chapter two, sought to understand the farm worker using theory drawing on paternalism, alongside a neo-Weberian approach (Hillyard 2007).

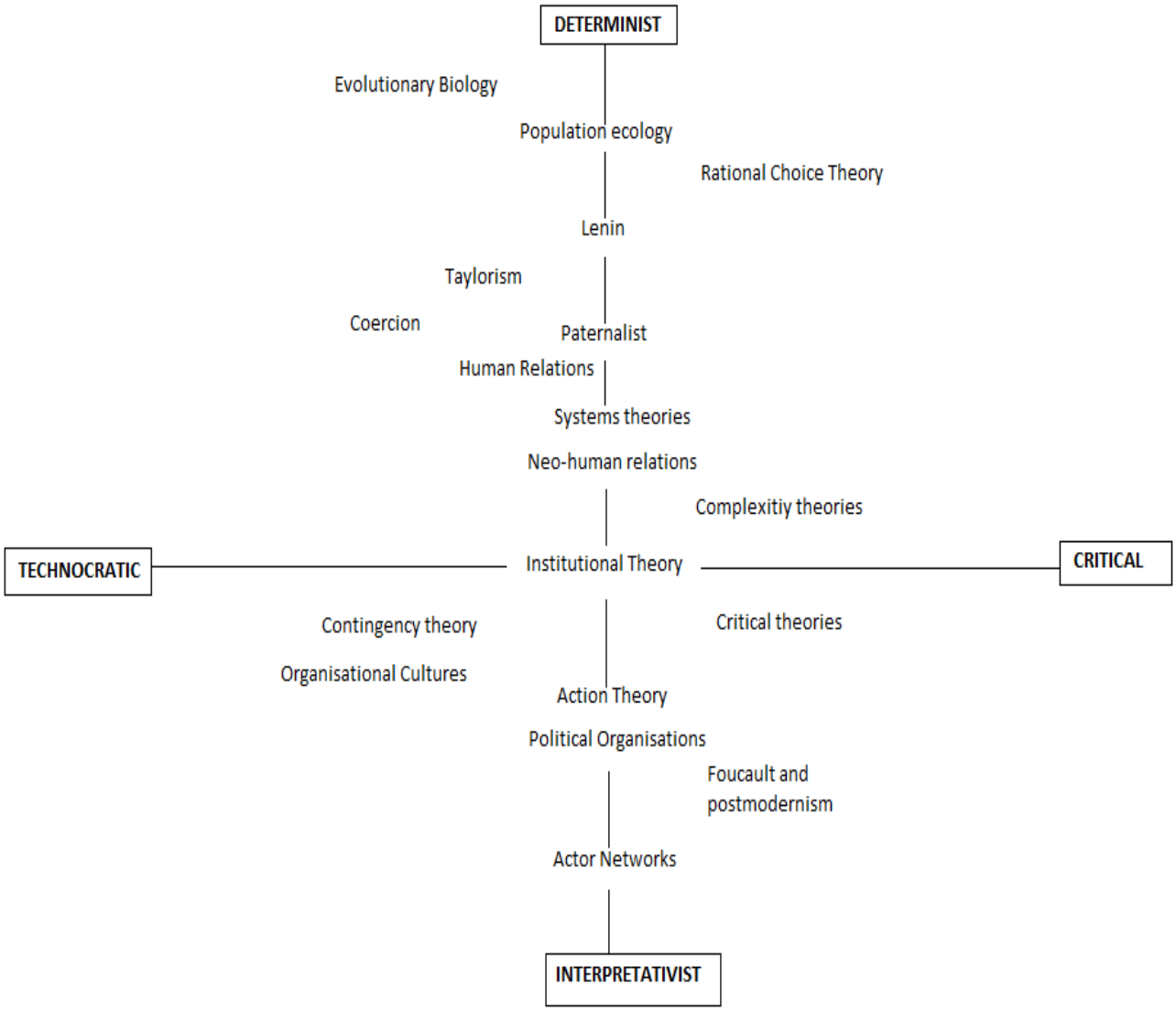

Figure 4.1: Organisational theories of work. Adapted from Grint (2005: 114)

Although Newby (1977) draws attention to job satisfaction amongst farm workers being attained via routes external to the achievement of management goals, such as the intrinsic value of working outdoors or work-task variety, the emphasis of his study focusses on the paternalistic form of organization that was maintained on the farms being studied via which 'relationships were maintained which legitimised the inequalities between the wealthy farmers and the workforce by encouraging workers to identify fully with the existing social structure' (Short 2014: 42).

Winter (1978) identified 'the need for a new direction in agricultural labour science' (ibid: 37), recognizing the predominance of the human relations tradition in attempts to understand work motivation and job satisfaction. Human relations management theory attributes worker satisfaction to a common shared goal of business development and growth, maintaining that shared goal as being the main determinant in worker motivation. However, according to Winter (1978) 'a farm worker's motivation towards work may be dependent on a large number of factors external to the work situation that in no way are under the control of any management strategy' (ibid: 41).

Although Newby allows for some expressive element to the farm worker's orientation to work due to initial responses regarding job satisfaction, he bypasses the potential detail and importance of this by counter-balancing ideas of the expressive with the idea that the farm worker's orientation to work was also instrumental due to the weakness of their own market situation (Newby 1977).

Theories of work organization in the agricultural workplace have been fairly limited and the absence of research examining the link between farm workers and sustainable intensification demand the adoption of a theory whose net spreads widely enough to encapsulate not only internal relations of the workplace or the subjective psychological processes of the worker, but also the community, the landscape and the minutiae of a life working directly with the land. Actor Network Theory, which adopts a more interpretivist/relationist approach, proves practicable for such a purpose.

4.1.2 Rural Sociology Perspectives

Historically, the farm labour contributor has been inexorably connected to their place of work, their community and to local economic processes, encapsulated by Tönnies's (1887/1995) concept of *Gemeinschaft*. Referring to community in its pre-industrial form, Tönnies attempted to provide a conceptual framework of relationships to illustrate contrasts between social relations as they were prior to and post – industrialisation. *Gemeineschaft* or community, comprises 'the whole of mankind' (ibid: 38) whilst Gesellschaft, or society, is 'conceived as a mere coexistence of people independent of each other' (ibid: 38). His work characterises differences between rural and urban society and led the way in sociological debates around societal segmentation stimulated by industrialization and changing market forces. Critics of Tönnies work point out the failure of his underlying ontology whereby the differences in 'his exposition [were] so inextricably interwoven with his beliefs and ideals that the cognitive value of his theory was gravely impaired' (Elias 1974: xiii). Equally dichotomous has proved his 'conferring of the term community on a specific *locale'* (Bell and Newby 1974: 4,

original emphasis) which was recognised early on as being an ineffectual and primitive stance from which to conceptualise community.

More commonly, early approaches to the rural were less relational, rather adhering to 'a positivist epistemology which held that the rural could be accurately captured in quantitative data and processed to produce a "true" representation' of rural life (Woods 2011: 31). Although resting on the side of geographical discourse, the wave that swept up academic understandings of the rural was transdisciplinary in the UK, gradually seeping away from such positivist discourses through an era of structuralist theories and political-economy perspectives in the 1970s and 1980s, to ultimately have the 'cultural turn' shake off the positioning of the rural within the broader imaginings of capitalist society to embrace post-structuralist theories, including the relational (Woods 2011).

Nevertheless, varying approaches to changes in rural communities have been largely anthropocentric, downplaying the role played by non-human factors, such as the farm, the land, landscapes and animals. Paraphrasing Pahl (1966), who dismissed ideas of 'rural' and 'urban' as meaningful sociological variables, referring to them instead as a geographical expression, Newby (1977) states that 'there is nothing in the social structure of the East Anglian countryside that could not be found in an urban setting, and nothing in the attitudes and behaviour of agricultural workers which could not be found among certain groups of urban, industrial workers' (ibid: 100). But this thesis will argue that particular attributes of farm work contribute to a unique tapestry – a lifescape – that does in fact distinguish the farm worker from other groups working elsewhere. This echoes Cassidy and McGrath (2014) who state:

> 'Farming occupies a distinct 'domain' […] within rural life and farm livelihoods create a wider set of norms, expectations, economic connections and social opportunities beyond the farm gate for those involved. Engagement in farming is therefore 'emplaced' in the sense that there are social and cultural aspects of acceptance, recognition and involvement associated with local life on and off the farm' (ibid: 21)

Interview findings demonstrate how the different farm labour contributors identify themselves in terms of both human and non-human relationships, demonstrating how the lens examining farm-rural and rural-urban continuums needs to widen to include everything that contributes to the lifescape of the actor being studied.

4.2 The 'Lifescape' and Actor Network Theory

> *'When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe' (John Muir 1911: 110)*

Newby (1977) centred his theory of the deferential farm worker on the interactional relationship between both the worker and the farmer as well as the worker and society, a dynamic Woods (2011) would describe as 'performing the rural' (ibid: 200), an interplay between actors, either routine or staged, which contributes to the formation and maintenance of identities on the rural platform. Newby's analysis, however, places little emphasis on the emotional, visceral connection of the worker to both the farm and its surrounding landscape, thus ignoring how farm workers engage with space and how the embodied performances of farm work are as 'important as representational forms in the enactment of practices that constitute rural identity and rural well-being' (Woods 2011: 206). Woods rightly acknowledges farming as a distinct occupation upon which not only an economic purpose can be mapped, but also certain social, cultural and moral aspects which may not be applicable to other forms of work. Therefore, although the performance of the farm worker is enacted through their relationships with the farm and the community, as deliberated by Newby, the identity of the farm worker is also tied up in the farm site itself, the land, and other non-human entities, producing a relationship 'where people influence place and place influences people' (Convery 2006: 449). This might be less the case for itinerant workers if circulating between numerous different holdings, although as a cohort, a mass body of workers, little doubt exists as to their influence on place, the most notable example being migrant workers on the landscape of California (Mitchell 1996).

In a study examining identity and emplacement of both farmers and shepherds with regards to the farm and the land worked, Gray (2002) adopted the term consubstantiality in his approach to this symbiosis. Consubstantiality refers to a sense of an individual, in this case the farmer, and the farm having a shared essence. Gray employs an ethnographic approach in his study of hill sheep farmers and workers in the Scottish borders and their sense of place, which he asserts is 'significantly different' from that held by the borders townspeople. This opposition between the town and the country affects the way Borderers conceive of the borders as 'a distinct cultural and historical place' (Gray, 2000: 3). He examines the meaning and importance of both 'place' and 'space' as contributors to this account of identity and emplacement, drawing on Casey's (1996) argument that place is 'the primary human experience and is prior to space,' (Gray 2000: 7) encompassing specificity and meaning, whilst space is more abstract or 'dehumanised,' a secondary experience. Gray states that the 'placedness

that humans experience as a condition of being-in-the-world is contrasted with the abstract concept of space' (ibid:7).

This idea of a sense of place and its relevance to the identity of different people working on the land, as well as to the community and the land itself can be extended to workers outside of the Scottish borders. At the same time, it is important to recognise that the idea of place and space is being constantly redefined due to supranation changes and events such as Britain's membership of the EU and regulation by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), an aspect which contributes to Appadurai's concept of 'deterritorialisation' where 'groups are no longer tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous' (Appadurai 1998: 48).

Not only the literal applications of space and place are considered within this text, but also the spatial aspects arising from class distinctions on the farm. Standing outside the various contradictory opinions held by farmers and shepherds with regards to each other's economic situation, Gray identifies this distinction as being 'embedded in the distinctive territorial organisation of sheep and division of farm labour such that farmers and shepherds each have a distinct place of responsibility on the farm and as a result are in a particular hierarchical relation to each other' (ibid: 203-204). The shepherd's place is a specific section of the farm, looking after the less valuable ewes, whilst the farmer's place is the whole farm, and being in charge of the more valuable tups.

Gray provides an interesting typology of aspects brought up in interviews regarding the class relations and stereotypes:

Encompassing	:	Encompassed
Whole	:	Part
Valued	:	Less valued/devalued
Farm	:	Hirsel
Farmer	:	Shepherd
Domesticated	:	Wild
Tups	:	Ewes
Discipline	:	Indulgence
Dominance	:	Subordination
Control	:	Resistance

Many of the above are aspects that are examined in this thesis, between farmers, farm workers and contractors in relation to each other and to other non-human actants, and the equivalence/whole-part configuration applied accordingly.

Gray states that the 'sense of place' on a farm is polysemous for hill sheep people, a term to describe multiple meanings, in this case he asserts that spatial, social and moral meanings occur all at once. Gray's conclusions regarding the Borders Hill Sheep farmers and farm workers resonate with some of the results from Newby's work, echoing beliefs around the acquisition and transmission of class membership, the idea of class being 'bred' into an individual (genetic transmission), usually a view held by a farmer, and conversely, the perception that the farmer is brought up to think 'they are better than workers' (behavioural adaptation), usually a view held by the worker. In short, Gray believes that hill sheep farming in Teviothead and the Scottish Borderlands as a whole is 'imbued with a sense of place.' And that the relationship between the farm family and the farm itself is consubstantial, meaning of the same essence.

Whilst useful in examining sense of place, perhaps a more useful term than consubstantiality to describe the relationship between actors who work on the farm and their relationship to that space is through the concept of the 'lifescape'. Plucked from work originally produced by anthropologist, Nazarea (1999) in the Philippines, where a lifescape is described as the 'superimposition of human intentions, purposes, and viewpoints over environmental features and the resulting patterns of production, consumption and distribution' (ibid: 91), a number of social scientists (Convery 2006; Howarth and O'Keefe 1997; Convery et al 2005; Cassidy and McGrath 2015) have adopted and adapted the meaning of the term (Table 4.1). Somé and McSweeney (1996), the first to apply Nazarea's term to their work, suggest that 'lifescape refers to the social, cultural and economic interactions that are occurring across the landscape' (ibid: 1). Convery et al (2005), in examining the emotional geographies of foot and mouth disease following the outbreak in 2001, apply this concept of lifescape to the agricultural community, using it to 'capture the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock and farming community and to elucidate the heterogeneity of agricultural emotional landscapes (ibid: 99). They suggest that the human and the non-human are separated by an 'osmotic' boundary, thus making people, the places they inhabit, the spaces within which they interact and the livestock they work with linked on an intimate yet fluid and constantly moving level (ibid: 101). According to Convery et al (2005), it was in the very disruption of the taken-for-granted lifescapes of the farmers by the foot and mouth epidemic that unveiled how much social identity, self-esteem and well-being were shaped by their particular

lifescapes, with an emphasis on the role of everyday place and everyday activities on these factors. In impacting upon one or more of the elements feeding into a lifescape, causing 'multiple fissures' in the lifescape (ibid: 103), the relationship with the landscape, the livestock and the community were all affected.

Table 4.1

Comparison of author descriptions of the concept of lifescape

Interpretation and description of the term 'lifescape'	**Author**
The 'superimposition of human intentions, purposes, and viewpoints over environmental features and the resulting patterns of production, consumption and distribution'	Nazarea (1999: 91)
'The social, cultural and economic interactions that are occurring across the landscape'	Somé and McSweeney (1996: 12)
'Human agency and their relations with technology, economics, morality and opportunity create places which guarantee livelihoods for the community'	Howarth and O'Keefe (1997: 93)
'A multiple 'place' where […] people's emotions, knowledge and discourses are framed within a combination of home, work, land and nature'	Cassidy and McGrath (2015: 20)
'the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock and farming community and elucidates the heterogeneity of agricultural emotional landscapes'	Convery et al (2005: 101)

It is this interpretation that will prove useful in the examination of the shared essence between the farm labour contributor, the land worked, the animals tended to and the farm itself, as well as those relationships extending beyond this connection, to that with the farmer and the local and wider community. The qualitative aspect of this study will attempt to articulate the emotional, spatial and social dimensions of the relationship between farm labour contributors, farms, landscape, livestock and community across the spectrum of people who contribute to labour on the land.

Drawing loosely on Actor Network Theory, 'a disparate family of material semiotic tools, sensibilities, and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located' (Law 2009: 141) the lifescape model provides an efficient vehicle through

which to understand all aspects of the life of the farm labour contributor. Law's description of Actor Network theory as an approach recognising and enacting heterogeneous relations closely resembles the objective of the lifescape model, where the human capital focus is surpassed by focussing on 'all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, "nature", ideas, organisations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements' (ibid: 141). In the case of this study, this might also include technology, the weather and the state, for example. Law deliberated this approach as a theory, ascertaining it as descriptive rather than explanatory; as a story-telling tool kit, rather than a grand social theory. This complements the narrative approach that the major results section of this thesis will take.

Actor Network Theory offers an alternative framework to the analysis of relationships and structures that all too often concentrate either on the production and reproduction of social structures through individual participation (Giddens 1984) and the role of human actors and how they influence social structures via one another in the form of social relations (Bourdieu 1990). It is, according to Latour (2005), 'that social theory which has turned "the Big Problem" of social science from a resource into a topic to solve it' (ibid: 170), although this has also brought the strength of the theory in developing a critical theory of organisation into question (Whittle and Spicer 2008). For the purposes of this thesis and its aim to understand assemblages of actors and actants in relation to the ambiguous agenda of sustainable intensification, the author proposes that, particularly with regards to farming, 'sociologies that do not take machines and architectures as seriously as they do people will never solve the problem of reproduction' (Law 1992 :389).

The ANT approach has been adopted previously in analyses of the farming system. Noe and Alrøe (2012) state that 'its strength lies in the general and open mapping of the relational structures of networks and […] is well suited to address the heterogeneity of agri-food systems' (ibid: 390). The impetus for the use of ANT in this Danish study was also the recognition that external actors outside of the traditional farming unit were playing an ever-increasing role in decision-making processes being made on-farm.

Networks will be examined in terms of either being vertical or horizontal (Figure 4.2). Horizontal networks are those which occur across a domain between multiple actors or groups and are mobile, such as relationships between farm labour contributors and other farm labour contributors, family, and livestock. Vertical networks are those which

are static and occur ‘in-place’, such as relationships between farm labour contributors and the farm, the land and in this instance, the weather.

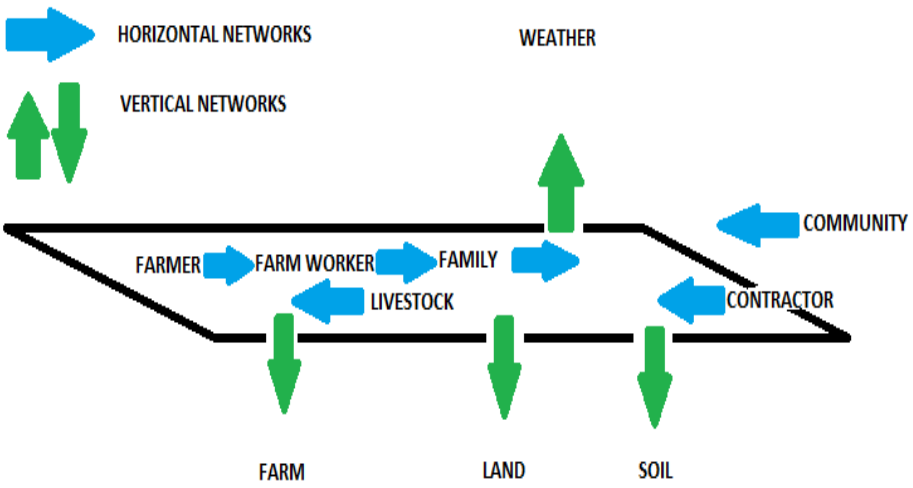

Figure 4.2: Horizontal and vertical networks

4.2.1 The Fluidity of the Lifescape in Agricultural Communities

A deeper understanding of how the contemporary labour force in agriculture has been gradually transforming over the last century was detailed in Chapter Two, with the recognition that the very structure of the agricultural labour market in Britain is changing to one of increased flexibility over the traditional model of employment. Howarth and O’Keefe (1999) suggest that a lifescape is a production system which is dynamic, resilient and linked to place. In the same way that ‘the blending of cultures, religions and economies has been done throughout history to ensure survival of the community and the building of new lifescapes’ (ibid: 94), the survival of agriculture in relation to its labour market means that the emergence of the agricultural contractor has meant the formation of new lifescapes. Cassidy and McGrath (2015) state that if ‘people occupy quite differentiated roles and engage in different types of farm performance, the question then becomes whether and how these farm roles might influence their place connections, attachments and affiliations with local community life’ (ibid: 21). In line with the objectives of this thesis, place connection will include the land and landscape as well as the farm.

The next section introduces the Human Capability Framework and how this will be used in the final part of the results section of the thesis. The Human Capability Framework can be linked to the lifescape model in an attempt to deal with constraints in the industry relating to labour, the most notable being the shortage of skilled labour.

4.3 The Human Capability Framework

Due to the non-pecuniary aspects of farm work playing such a prominent role in the social reproduction of farming and the 'decision' to farm, factors including being outside, or the lifestyle, for example (Wuthnow 2015), farming lends itself well to examination under the Human Capability framework, as opposed to more traditional economic theories. Although Basu and Kanbur (2008) determine that the human capability approach is not dissimilar from what they call the critical political economy approach where 'the primitive analytical elements [are] real human beings with their lived experience' (ibid: 33), and state that the one approach can enrich the other.

In their examination of the impending farm labour crisis in agriculture in New Zealand, Tipples and Morriss (2002) were among the first to apply the Human Capability Framework to western agriculture as a means to consider the labour market. Developed by Sen in his approach of looking at freedoms as an alternative positioning of social realisations to both utility-based and resource-based foci, the human capability approach considers 'the freedom of people to choose what they value'; bypassing what people actually do in order to determine what they can do (Lindsay and McQuaid 2010).

4.3.1 Sen and the Origin of the Human Capability Approach

Sen describes how, according to the Capability Approach, 'a person's advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability - less real opportunity- to achieve those things that she has reason to value' (Sen 2010: 231). The well-being of an individual, according to the HCA, should be regarded according to what they are free to be or do on a more general scale, but can be examined on a micro level such as looking at access to skills development, opportunities to contribute within a position, or the more social aspects of a job role. Lindsay and McQuaid (2010) point out that not only is paid work important in establishing an identity and opportunities to connect with others, but that 'well-being is defined by the quality of that work, the ability of the individual to cope with family and domestic responsibilities, opportunities for leisure and the adequacy of housing

arrangements; (ibid: 4), all aspects which are particularly pertinent to the life of a farm labour contributor.

However, the capabilities approach deals not only with wellbeing, but also with the agency of an individual. This implies that rather than being merely a spectator who has no role in their own personal development, every individual should have a level of agency freedom which allows them to be active participants in their work-life formation; in their learning, their ability to move about within the labour market if dissatisfied with the aspects of work which 'one has reason to value' (Lindsay and McQuaid 2010: 4) and their progression in their chosen field of employment.

Tipples and Morriss (2002) describe how the capability framework consists of three integral elements; capacity, opportunities and matching, suggesting that these components 'provide a basis from which individuals may be seen as participating in a variety of social relations that affect their choices and aspirations' (ibid: 25). *Capacity* encompasses not just skills and knowledge but also the attitudes and qualities that people have and how the efficient use of all of these elements allow them to take advantage of the labour market opportunities that they find available. *Opportunities* refer to the 'alternatives available to people to use their capacity such as skills, knowledge and attitudes as a way in which they gain financial or personal reward' (ibid: 25). And *matching* implies the key linkage between capacities and opportunities. Neither element can be mutually exclusive yet each one has to be covered analytically in order to understand the impact one has on the other. Each cloud (Figure 4.3) represents a particular contributing factor to the success of the matching process, bringing in more of the subtle factors that play a role in the whole process that might normally be ignored in labour market analyses.

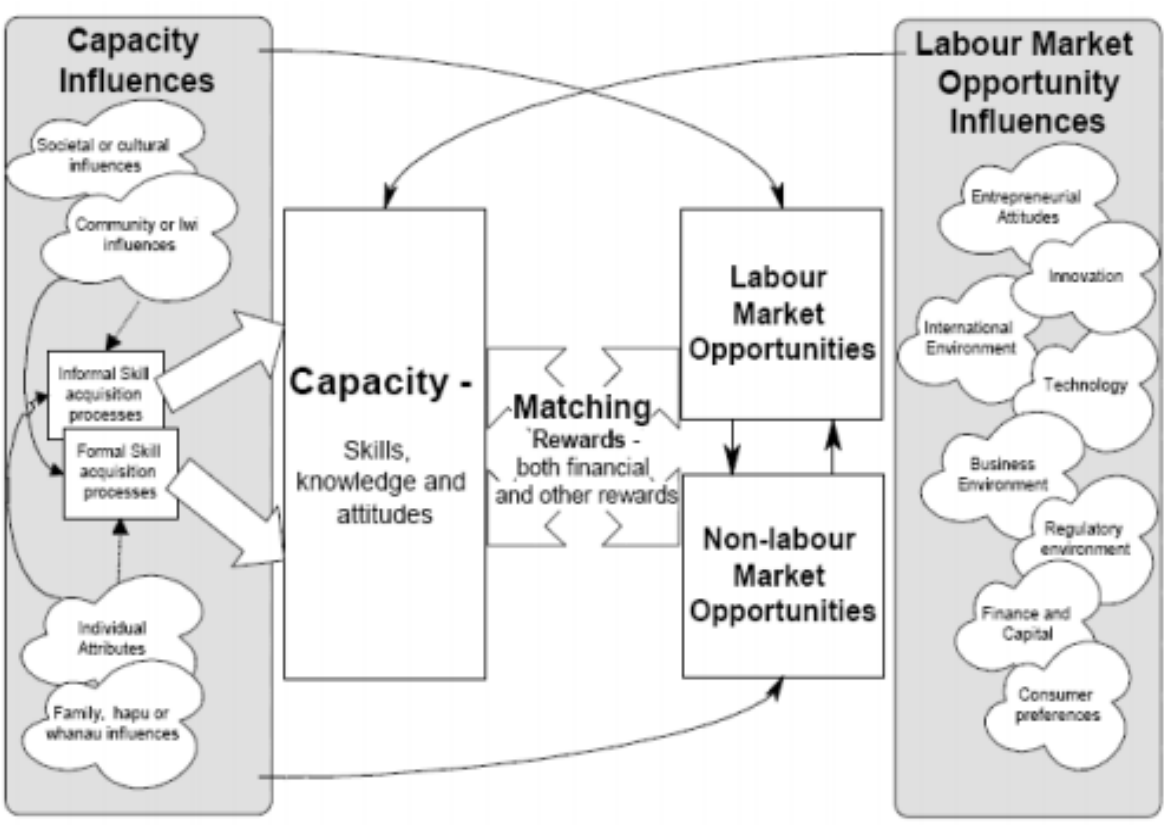

Figure 4.3: The Human Capability Framework (*Source*: Department of Labour (1999: 19))

4.3.2 The Human Capability Framework as a Tool for Policy-Making

New Zealand's Department of Labour adopted the use of the HCF in 1999 (Tipples 2004), considering it a guide that was valuable for not only the development of employment policy but social policy also.

Sen (2010) is confident of the value of the framework as a policy-making tool:

> 'The choice of an informational focus – a concentration on capabilities – can be quite momentous in drawing attention to the decisions that would have to be made and the policy analysis that must take account of the right kind of information. The assessment of societies and social institutions can be deeply influenced by the information on which the approach focuses, and that is exactly where the capability approach makes its main contribution' (ibid: 233)

The Human Capability Strategy launched by New Zealand's Department of Labour in 2003 uses the tool to evaluate challenges presented with regards to labour and skill in the agricultural industry (Murray 2006) and a significant study carried out by Massey University and Lincoln University discovered, using the HCF as a tool, that 'marked

discrepancies between what the industry appears to want and what providers appear to provide became apparent' (Tipples and Morris 2002: 26).

4.3.3 The Human Capability Framework in Agriculture

The fluid and flexible nature of agricultural labour requires a framework that is equally flexible, with the ability to be superimposed onto a number of differing aspects of that labour. The HCF allows for this level of flexibility.

Newby (1977) implicitly dealt with a number of the elements covered by the HCF and the lifescape model in *The Deferential Worker*. Employment relations, interactions with the community, job satisfaction, and accommodation all fit loosely with one or both of the two perspectives. And Newby himself recognized the need for a comprehensive framework by which to analyse occupational mobility:

> 'It seems that a more sophisticated model of occupational mobility will need to incorporate on the one hand a theory of occupational choice with, on the other, a model of occupational opportunity. The latter will include the variable used in the econometric analysis of labour mobility, since it seems plausible to suppose that the most important factor concerns change in the economic structure of the labour market, Occupational choice, however, can be understood only in terms of factors less often investigated by economists. There is some evidence, for example, that the decision to enter agricultural employment is embedded in the structural context of the individual worker – the influences of immediate social networks, like the family, peer group and local community' (Newby 1977: 150)

However, Newby's emphasis remained on economic factors such as income as 'the most sensitive indicator' of a farm worker's overall situation (ibid:152).

4.4 Linking the Lifescape Model and the Human Capability Framework

The link between the Lifescape model, which has been adopted to explicate the lived experience of farm workers in this thesis, and the Human Capability Framework, which seeks to deal with the labour constraints faced by the industry on both a micro and macro level, is that the HCF perspective is 'inescapably concerned with a plurality of different features of our lives and concerns' (Sen 2010: 233). This includes features such as health and well-being, the ability to be a part of a community, and the development of skills that might enhance career satisfaction and progression. Beyond that of the individual and the social:

> ‘The capability approach focuses on human life, and not just on some detached objects of convenience, such as incomes or commodities that a person may possess, which are often taken, especially in economic analysis, to be the main criteria of human success’ (Sen 2010: 233)

Sen goes on to state that:

> ‘By proposing a fundamental shift in the focus of attention from the means of living to the actual opportunities a person has, the capability approach aims at a fairly radical change in the standard evaluative approaches widely used in economics and social studies’ (ibid: 253)

This theoretical combination provides a solid framework upon which to ponder the sustainability of agriculture economically and environmentally, as well as recognizing and allowing the lives of those working the same land to flourish, to create a ‘mutually sustainable future for humans and other lifeforms […] in which people live as rooted, active, participating members of a reasonably scaled, naturally bounded, ecologically defined territory, or life place’ (Thayer 2003: 6)

Therefore the functionality of the lifescape of the farm worker at the micro level determines the level of their capabilities which will ultimately affect the matching process to opportunities provided at a macro level. Rather than being an abstract concept simply detailing relationships and connectedness, an examination of the importance of the lifescape to those working the land might allow for new perspectives on current policies dealing with labour shortages in UK agriculture.

Sen also briefly discusses the role of the environment in terms of the opportunities it offers to people. This perception ties in loosely with part of the lifescape model, although it is limited by its emphasis on what the environment can do for us rather than any responsibility on the part of people to act in favour of the environment. Indeed, Pelenc et al (2013) claim that Sen’s ‘acknowledgment of the role of environment as a key dimension of human well-being remains ambiguous and vague’ (ibid: 78).

4.4.1 Responsibility and Sustainability in the Human Capability Approach

As described earlier in this chapter, a significant limitation of Sen’s approach to capabilities is the ambiguity around the role played by the environment. In order to tie in these models and frameworks with the sustainable intensification agenda, this element of the theory needs to be examined further.

Pelenc et al (2013) critically explore the absence of concern for both ecological constraints and environmental sustainability within Sen's capability approach. They suggest that wellbeing cannot be assessed in a sustainable manner as the approach stands in its current form. Three significant shortcomings are identified with the approach. Firstly, they identify 'the weakness of the ecological dimension' of the framework, suggesting that this weakness can be (re)negotiated by relating the intrinsic and instrumental values of nature (ibid: 77). Secondly, responsibility is only regarded in consequential terms, suggesting that the environment should only be protected for instrumental reasons. And thirdly, Sen over-emphasises the individual in the framework, not accounting for the relationship between the individual and the collective. The process of overcoming these three shortcomings, according to Pelenc et al, 'makes it possible to fully integrate the ecological dimension into an extended vision of the capability approach' (ibid: 77).

The umbrella term of ecosystem services is adopted by Pelenc et al (2013) to refer to the services delivered by the natural environment. The human physiological needs such as clean air, water and food are provided, as are personal and collective needs attained through the economic, social and cultural functions of nature. Freedom, self-development, recreation, psychological health and physical health are promoted at the personal level, 'while at the collective level, they contribute to social relationships, standards and values, ethics, ideals, cultural identity, and so forth' (ibid: 79).

Although Sen (2010) delivers the idea that another significant aspect of freedom is that 'it makes us accountable for what we do' (ibid: 19), he is unclear as to how this accountability is exercised, especially towards the community and the environment. However, Pelenc et al point out that there is a difference between accountability, which they describe as 'the process by which we identify the author of an action' (2013: 85), otherwise referred to as ex-post responsibility, and ex-ante responsibility, defined as 'the individual's capacity to exercise self-restraint on a voluntary basis in order to satisfy obligations towards others, including non-human entities' (ibid: 86).

Becker (2006) identifies three fundamental relations of the human being: i) the relation of the human being with itself ii) with the community and iii) with nature. Relevant to all of human existence, these become even more pertinent in the examination of the people who work the land directly, in the pursuit of a sustainable future. Newby dedicated a great level of detail to the first and the second, which are revisited in this thesis. But the third relation will be looked at according to not only the responsibility

workers feel towards the environment, but also outlining the different levels at which they associate with it, including and extending past the instrumental value of the environment, the economic value and the social value.

Interestingly, Ballet et al (2011), who look to the Human Capability approach as a vehicle to understanding human/environment interactions conclude that it 'enables us to understand that types of behaviour are often based on the constraints facing individuals rather than the outcome of irresponsible attitudes or practices' (ibid: 1833). Accordingly, Pelenc et al (2013) conclude that an adjusted framework which extends beyond Sen's original strategy of analysis which includes looking at responsibilities, the environment and 'the collective' means that 'the exercise of responsibility is directly conducive to well-being and is an integral part of freedom of choice. By focusing only on the individual, a conventional CA analysis fails to explain this kind of cooperative behaviours. This example also illustrates how collective action can alleviate the 'moral effort' required by sustainability […] which cannot be assumed solely at the individual level' (ibid: 91).

This thesis will pull out these ideas of responsibility, not only towards the environment but also towards the community, constructing a final model according to which the agricultural labour market can be measured. The lifescape model enables us to look at the lives of the farm worker inclusively, rather than 'ignoring everything other than the pleasures or utilities they end up having' (Sen 2010: 19).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the Actor Network Theory as the primary vehicle via which this study will understand the qualitative results, positing the lifescape as the most efficient model by which to describe the analyses. The linkages between the model and the theory are explained as are the reasons for choosing this theory as opposed to more human-centred approaches.

Following an examination of the Human Capability Approach and its failings with regards to the environment, by looking at it under the lens of the Lifescape Approach, which combines 'livelihood' and 'landscape', a new perspective considering both the individual benefits and the greater common good (Lindsay and McQuaid 2010), will allow a broader examination of how all key elements of agricultural labour play out. Skills, knowledge, education, experience, place attachment, well-being, responsibility, work, social life, the ability to create and enjoy the freedom of the lifescape, and the effect of all of these actants exert on agriculture, the community and the environment

will come into play. Consequently, using the HCF creates its own opportunity; to comprehend how agricultural labour might contribute to the sustainability of each of these things in the future.

The human capability framework provides a more holistic measurement of labour market information, extending beyond employment rates, productivity or organization, to include wellbeing, agency, progression, satisfaction and work-life balance. It can bring together the needs and perspectives of both the employer (in this case the farmer), and the labour provider (the traditional hired worker or the contractor), to identify where gaps lie. The HCF can subsequently attempt to recognize how these gaps might be bridged through the adoption of existing or new policies to enable the sustainability of the labour market in agriculture, and thus the sustainability of the worker, the farmer, the farm, and agriculture more generally. In incorporating Pelenc et al's (2013) modified HCF, an exploration of responsibility felt by the key actors, and the opportunities and constraints faced by them with regards to attitudes and behaviours tied in with sustainability, enables the author to draw conclusions regarding the farm labour contributor and their relationship with the concept of sustainable intensification and sustainability more generally.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.0 Introduction

Due to the dearth of both recent statistical and sociological research regarding farm labour in the UK, a mixed-methods approach was selected for this thesis. Quantitative data provides a useful background to the numbers of all categories of farm workers currently contributing to labour on farms in the South West of England, as well as bringing attention to associated contemporary labour issues experienced by farmers. Whilst qualitative data reveals some of the stories behind these numbers, via studies of farmers, farm workers and agricultural contractors in Devon, consisting of semi-structured interviews. Together, the combination of these methods will act not only to paint a more accurate picture of the composition of farm labour in Devon in the twenty-first century, but also to infuse that picture with a level of detail that allows each of those previously 'neglected' actors a voice (Morris and Evans 2004).

5.1 Justification of Chosen Methods

Quantitative Methodology

The drivers behind the chosen quantitative method result from conclusions drawn from the literature reviews. Primarily, historical data collection techniques regarding all cohorts contributing to labour on British farms have proved to be inadequate due to ambiguous terminology regarding farm workers, and the complete omission of the agricultural contractor under the statistical 'farm labour' umbrella. Secondly, the narrow and restrictive window for recording numbers of workers offered by the June survey, which provides a snap-shot method of recording rather than considering how seasonal fluctuations affect staffing requirements (Ball 1987b), presents a deficient picture of the reality of farm labour over the course of the year. Any attempt to directly compare numbers of apprenticeships in agriculture over the last twenty years or more also proves challenging due to the abandonment of the Modern Apprenticeship system and the removal of the upper 25 age limit after 2002/03 (Mirza-Davies 2016).

Qualitative Methodology

Through the application of qualitative research techniques for the purposes of this research, the social aspects of farm labour are examined in order to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the current agricultural labour situation in the South West of England and to consider how best the industry might be equipped with a highly skilled workforce going forward. Since Newby's (1977) seminal work, *The Deferential Worker*, little research has been carried out looking at the overall changes in farm

labour and the repercussions of this on worker relationships with the community, farmers and the land. Crow recognised in 1990 how 'since Newby's research of the 1970s, few sociological farm studies of any sort have been undertaken, reflecting the fact that British sociology continues to have an overwhelming urban orientation' (Crow et al 1990: 253). Since then, agriculture-focussed research has experienced a resurgence (Riley 2010; Fish et al 2013; Morris et al 2017), yet farm labour, particularly domestic workers, has remained largely excluded from the agenda. Part of this research acts as a replication of Newby's benchmark piece of research; a re-examination, to some extent, of Newby's ideas. According to Marshall and Rossman, (1999):

> The researcher may use concepts developed by previous researchers and formulate questions similar to those used in previous research. Data collection, however, may be in a different setting, with a different group, and certainly at a different time. Thus, the results of the research will constitute an extension of theory that will expand the generalisations or more finely tune theoretical proposition (ibid: 35)

Following on from discussions regarding the lack of quantitative data with regards to contractors as contributors to the labour on a farm, Lobley et al (2002) suggest that further research is also required to examine 'the economic and social implications' of the increase in contract farming (ibid: 26).

5.2 A Mixed-Methods Approach

It is clear that the composition of labour has changed drastically on most farms in the UK over the last fifty years, and is still changing (see Chapter Six). What is not so clear is how, nor what these changes mean for agriculture in the UK, the land involved and the farmers and communities that are ultimately obliged to transition with it. By implementing a mixed-methods approach, the research objectives as outlined in Chapter One, are most likely to be effectively achieved.

Newby's (1977) self-described 'eclectic' methodology in researching *The Deferential Worker* is mirrored, in part, by the sources and methods of data collection executed for this thesis, where historical sources already described in earlier chapters are incorporated, along with a postal survey and semi-structured interviews. After six months, Newby concluded that his qualitative data and quantitative results 'increasingly came to complement each other' (ibid: 123), a pattern also experienced during the process of this research.

For the purpose of this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative data are required in order to tell the present day story of the farm labour contributor in South West England, as one form of data supports the other. Where quantitative data enables a 'more general understanding' of a situation (Cresswell 2011: 8), qualitative data fills in the details. Cresswell (2011) describes the mixed methods approach as 'an intuitive way of doing research that is constantly displayed through our everyday lives' (ibid: 1). In examining the current situation of farm workers in the UK, the quantitative data supplements the qualitative, as the unravelling stories take precedence over the numbers.

Bryman discovered that the major contributing discipline using the mixed methods approach is sociology (36% of the articles examined) and that the predominating combination employed by researchers tends to be a structured interview or questionnaire on the quantitative side, and a semi-structured interview on the qualitative side (Bryman 2006), a trend reflected in this research.

Utilising a mixed-methods approach ensures that any drawbacks of one method can be suitably offset by the strengths of the other, so 'the combination of quantitative and qualitative data provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach by itself' (Cresswell 2011: 8).

Greene et al (1989) identify five justifications for the adoption of a mixed-methods approach; triangulation; complementarity; development; initiation, and expansion (ibid: 259). For the purposes of this research, complementarity; where the researcher 'seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from another' and expansion; where the researcher 'seeks to extend the breadth and range of enquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components' represent the main reasons for justification of this approach (ibid: 259). Bryman (2006) develops this list into sixteen more detailed reasons for utilising a mixed-methods approach, all of which fall in to the above five categories to some extent, several of which apply to this study. That which best describes current intention is that of illustration; the use of qualitative data to put 'meat on the bones' of 'dry' quantitative data (ibid: 106). Triangulation also constitutes a small part of this study, especially with regards to the topic of labour availability, where the results of an investigation employing a method associated with one research strategy are cross-checked against the results of using a method with associated with the other research strategy' (Bryman 2008: 611).

The postal survey addresses the numbers of people employed by farms and the types of labour employed over the course of a full year, allowing an examination of variables

that might come in to play, such as type and size of farming system on the different cohorts of labour employed. Qualitative analysis deepens this understanding by examining the different types of labour and their interactions with the farmer, the land and the community. It is a fixed mixed-methods design 'where the use of quantitative and qualitative methods is predetermined and planned at the start of the research process and the procedure are implemented as planned' (Cresswell 2011: 54).

Where it would have been more effective for the data to be collected sequentially, e.g. quantitative first and qualitative later, essentially to provide a springboard from which to begin qualitative or quantitative research methods, time did not allow for this. So, both sets of data were collected simultaneously. A possible outcome according to Bryman (2006) is that 'while a decision about design issues may be made in advance and for good reasons, when the data are generated, surprising findings or unrealised potential in the data may suggest unanticipated consequences of combining them' (ibid: 99).

Under the circumstances, the qualitative data has priority over the quantitative data, which acts to provide a background rather than to seek further explications regarding farm labour in terms of numbers. For this reason, rather than provide a single chapter dedicated to the analysis of the quantitative results, the numerical data is interspersed amongst the qualitative chapters in order to enable flow.

5.2.1 Quantitative Method

Postal Survey

A survey method best fits the requirements of this research. Identified as the 'preferred method if the researcher wishes to obtain a small amount of information from a large number of subjects' (Marshall and Rossman 1999: 139), it enabled a thorough assessment of the sources of farm labour; the essential starting point from which to understand the changes and challenges of labour in South West agriculture. Thirteen questions pertinent to farm labour formed part of a larger survey conducted by the Centre for Rural Policy Research for The State of Agriculture in South West England Study, examining changing farming fortunes, practices and the plans of farmers. The overall survey is a longitudinal study which commenced in 2006, was repeated in 2010, and again in 2016. The group of farms surveyed had already participated in similar surveys for the Centre, agreeing both to take part in further research as well as having their contact details kept on record. A number of the original questions on labour were retained, while the addition of thirteen new questions included factors such as hiring practices, a wider labelling of the term 'farm worker', gender, ethnicity and labour availability (see Appendix A for full list of survey questions). Demographic information

belonging to the wider survey, such as farm type and farm size, presents opportunities for further analyses for statistical significance.

Sampling

The sample size for previous surveys was approximately 4000 (determined largely by cost). A 39% response rate to the 2010 survey reflected 6% of holdings in the region and 11% of South West farmland. A slightly lower response rate was anticipated for the 2016 survey due to likely changes in numbers of respondents' circumstances, respondents tiring of responding to the same survey, or a general decreased willingness to participate (Galea and Tracy 2007).

An information sheet including details regarding the survey (see Appendix B), was initially distributed to 4182 farms on the 7th March 2016, along with an accompanying letter (Appendix C) and a return freepost envelope. An option to complete the survey online was also provided, via Bristol Online Surveys. The incentive of the possibility of winning a £50 store voucher was included in the survey. Reminder cards were then distributed to all farms that had not returned the survey nor opted out on the 23rd March, with a final distribution of surveys to all remaining eligible farms yet to take part sent out on the 1st April 2016.

1486 responses were recorded, including 229 op outs and 1251 completed surveys, with 36 respondents choosing to complete the survey online. 201 farmers out of all potential respondents opted out due to their farming status having changed to either retired, deceased, or sold/moved away from farm, whilst 28 cited a lack of willingness to take part altogether. The overall response rate including those no longer able to complete the survey was 29.9%, or 31.4% if discounting those no longer capable of completing the survey (Winter et al 2016).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) 'the basic aim of survey research is to describe and explain statistically the variability of certain features of a population' (ibid: 130). As previously mentioned, the categorisation of farm labour has proven to be sloppy and ambiguous, tending to focus on full-time or part-time farm workers and sometimes the farmer, his family and seasonal labour. This narrow perception of 'who' is a farm worker misrepresents total labour input in both earlier and modern-day agriculture, and risks large-scale misunderstanding of skills and knowledge requirements in farming today. Although not a national survey, data collected via this study captures a more accurate idea of where farmers source their labour from over the course of the year than any other national survey. This is due to the inclusion of,

over and above afore-mentioned categories; contractors, interns/apprentices, other partners/director, volunteers, wwoofers, and 'other'.

Each question, apart from those which are obviously open-ended, was coded in order to be able to analyse the results more quickly and efficiently. SPSS was chosen as the most effective software tool with which to analyse the data.

The survey is representative of a cross section of both farm sizes and farm types, although comparisons with Defra census data (2017d) demonstrates that larger farms are over-represented in the survey, as are mixed farms (Appendix D). Possible reasons for this are that the Defra census measures by holding, whereas the Farm Survey measures by farm. Because some farms are made up of several holdings, this could contribute to the difference in data samples. It is also possible that operators of smaller holdings may have felt it less relevant to participate in the survey due to the size of their holding. In terms of the bias apparently shown towards mixed farms in the Farm Survey, this might be partly attributable to the fact that Defra's definition of farm type is based on standard gross margins, whereas the Farm Survey data was based on the perception of the respondent regarding their farm type. For farmers involved in more than one operation, stating 'mixed' as your farm type can prove an easy option in such a form-filling exercise.

The strengths of the survey as a research method are 'accuracy, generalisability, and convenience. Accuracy in measurement is enhanced by quantification, replicability, and control over observer effects. Survey results can be generalised to a larger population within known limits of error. Surveys are amenable to rapid statistical analysis and are comparatively easy to administer and manage' (Marshall and Rossman 1999: 130-131). As a stand- alone technique, the survey method is cheaper than interviewing. It also tends to be quicker than the structured interview process. Although not necessarily relevant here, attention must be paid to the fact that it was undertaken as part of a larger survey by actors external to this piece of research, so although the process was not time-consuming for the researcher, the analysis of the additional data proved to be so.Surveys are also less susceptible to 'interviewer effects', enabling the avoidance of interviewer variability, and might be considered more convenient for the respondent in terms of time taken to complete (Bryman 2008: 217-218).

A number of weaknesses do exist, some of which are offset by the augmentation by qualitative methods, such as it being of 'little value for examining complex social relationships or intricate patterns of interaction' (Marshall and Rossman: 131). Bryman (2008) lists further disadvantages as; the inability to prompt or probe with answers, the 'salience' of the questions to the respondent affecting the likelihood of a response, the

inability to ask ‘other kinds’ of questions, difficulty in ensuring the ‘right person’ answers the questions, limits to the number of questions due to the possibility of ‘respondent fatigue’, and a risk of missing data and generally lower response rates (ibid: 218-219). This latter weakness is corroborated by Parry et al (2005) who anticipate reluctance by farmers and farm workers to have to deal with more paperwork, a known cause of stress in the farming industry. ‘Self-reporting’ can also produce the problem of a farmer under or over-reporting data in the category of labour on a survey (Morrison et al 2005: 24).

And finally, bias might present itself through the respondents who chose to reply to a postal survey making it potentially unrepresentative of the whole (i.e. are younger, newer farmers more likely to respond than older farmers)?

All recorded responses to this survey were received and processed before the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum in June, 2016.

5.2.2 Qualitative Method

Case Study

According to Cresswell (2013), ‘case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system […] over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information’ (ibid: 97). The specific case of this study is farm labour contributors as a cohort but with that definition extending beyond that of the traditionally considered farm worker. Yin (2009) suggests the adoption of six types of data collection in carrying out case study research. These include documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts. This study will principally use semi-structured interviews, although documents and archival records referring to farm workers in Devon are also utilised in order to gain a wider picture of the history of farm labour in this region. Employing a variety of methods is important as, according to Cresswell (2013) ‘relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop [an] in-depth understanding’ (ibid: 98). Aside from creating a description or explanation regarding farm workers in Devon today, similarities and differences across cases will be analysed (Cresswell 2013).

Gerring (2004) argues that a case study is ‘an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalise across a larger set of units’ (ibid: 341), Goddard agrees that anything larger than one case becomes a collective case study, ‘the common theme among collective case studies is that they examine the same research question(s) within a

number of contexts, using identical methods of data collection and analysis' (Goddard 2010: 164).

Some case studies were available where a farmer, farm workers and/or contractors linked to the same holding were available for interview. But for some farms, this was not available or applicable due to either the farmer changing their mind about their employees or contractors being interviewed, or by their only employing one of these types of farm labour contributor. Therefore, a case is considered to be an individual, as opposed to a holding (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Range of 'cases[4]

Farmer	*Owner/principal director/Principal manager of agricultural holding*
Paid hired worker	*Full or part-time workers who are permanent, waged employees on the farm. For this research, apprentices are included here.*
Self-employed contractor	*Self-employed individuals or registered businesses which fulfil short-term contracts on an agricultural holding*

A total of 45 respondents were interviewed, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.2

Number of respondents interviewed, by cohort

Farmers	20
Farm Workers	17
Agricultural Contractors	8

Although 20 farmers were interviewed, some of these lived and worked on the same farms (as partners) so only 17 farms provide models in total. Of these seventeen, fifteen employ some kind of hired labour, be it full-time, part-time, seasonal or volunteer. Only one of the study farms did not use the services of contractors. Two of the farms did not employ any kind of hired labour but do use the services of contractors. The linkages between the different farms, farmers, farm workers and contractors are not specified further in order to protect the anonymity of the respondents. Only two farm workers were not linked to any of the farmers interviewed.

[4] No seasonal or casual workers were interviewed as part of this research

Anonymity also prevented the researcher from probing for any direct links between contractors and farmers, although sometimes names were mentioned by either cohort without solicitation which offered a further insight into farmer-contractor relationships.

Initially, two of Gosling et al's (2010) scales for measuring connectedness to nature and place attachment were adapted and employed as part of the qualitative interviewing process. These were given as written exercises to the respondents. However, early on into the fieldwork, the decision was made to drop the scales due to lower levels of literacy demonstrated by some of the respondents, a factor linked to education rather than age.

It is significant to mention that seventeen of the interviews took place before the June 23rd 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, with the rest being carried out post-referendum. It is unlikely that interview responses were affected by the outcome, apart from questions regarding the farm labour contributors' perceptions of the future. Due to the completion of this thesis prior to Britain's anticipated leaving of the European Union, Brexit will not provide a focus for discussion.

Interview

Kelly (2010) claims that 'informal interviews in an ethnographic field setting and 'natural conversation' are at one end of the continuum and standardised interviews at the opposite end' (ibid: 308). The presence of significant quantitative data forms the tendons which the meatier analyses of semi-structured interviews with farmers and other categories of farm workers will flesh out. A number of structured questions concerning basic employment information led to a number of more open-ended questions, attempting to identify deeper meanings, emotions and attachments around the relationships between farm workers, the farmer, the community and the land (see Appendix E). Farm workers and farmers predominate as respondents, with a separately-structured interview carried out with the farmers/land managers of each enterprise in order to identify needs, challenges and perceptions from their point of view. Fewer contractors act as respondents simply because fewer were willing/had the time to participate. Contrastingly to the survey technique, 'qualitative interviews […] explicitly involve the interviewer and respondent in interaction, as interaction partners' (Kelly 2010: 308).

A semi-structured interview is a more flexible method than a structured interview, allowing for richer and more detailed answers. They also allow the possibility of

explanation or clarification between the interviewer and interviewee regarding ambiguous questions/responses.

Limitations of interviewing techniques include the fact that the researcher relies upon the cooperation of the respondent. They may also be either unwilling or uncomfortable to divulge information the interviewer seeks to explore. Questions exist around honesty, which is unquantifiable, as well as the 'salience' and appropriateness of the questions (Marshall and Rossman 1999: 110). Further disadvantages are time-related, as the process of interviewing, transcription and analysis are all time-consuming processes, especially if interviews are documented verbatim.

The guide for interview questions was designed by drawing upon the literature review and research questions, and was loosely based on the questions designed by Newby (1977) during his research in East Anglia, with questions either being adapted or dropped according to the contemporary situation, as well as additional questions being incorporated to explore areas ignored by Newby. Although interviews for each cohort differed slightly, they all began with basic personal, family and educational details. They also all sought to explore participants' perceptions of their relationships with other farm labour contributors, the workplace, the land and their local and wider communities. All interviews were audio recorded, with participant consent, and for the purposes of coding, fully transcribed.

Sampling for the semi-structured interviews

Potential participants were obtained via a variety of methods, all of which instigated their own threads of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling whereby new respondents for a study are obtained through or with the help of existing participants. It is, according to Bryman (2008), 'a form of convenience sample' (ibid: 184) which is not effective for a quantitative study but can be so for a qualitative research strategy if the sample is not sought to be representative of a population. Initially, the author researched farms in Devon who were known to employ hired labour and/or contractors. This was conducted through a web investigation, as well as through a request for information on social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Dusek et al (2015) recognise that 'hard-to-reach populations are not generally open to researchers who do not have social entrées into the hidden population' (ibid: 281), therefore justifying the use of social media to gain access to said populations. The hard-to-reach status of each cohort is attributable to a variety of factors. Farmers tended to be reluctant to participate in the qualitative aspect of this research, often citing time constraints. But according to one contractor, a culture of secrecy also pervades farmer behaviour in the region. There possibly exists a sense of exhaustion

by an over-saturation of recent research in the area, or suspicion concerning the interview process conducted by a non-rural outsider (considered further in section 5.7 below). The inordinate number of hours worked by agricultural contractors, as well as limited contact data available online, made them the cohort most difficult to reach. Due to the majority of their business occurring via word-of-mouth recruitment methods, many revealed that they had not felt the need to advertise for several years. Phone numbers were gathered either via farmer interviews (with no confirmation to the farmer as to whether the contractor had been contacted), or by what little data existed online. And finally, the farm worker proved to be hard-to-reach as, apart from via the two informants, access to most workers required the initial approval of an employer. Those who were interviewed through this route were all allowed to be interviewed during work hours except for one.

Although participants for this research were not directly recruited through social media, its use opened up access to two key informants, each of whom is very active within the agricultural industry in Devon. They both provided details of further potential respondents or made direct contact between the author and the potential respondent.

Emails were sent to potential participants with a research participation request form (Appendix F) and an interview consent form. Where no response was received within a week, follow-up phone calls were made where possible. An advert was also placed in the author's local newsletter Speke Up[5].

A diversity of different farming operations was sought in order to give a voice to farm labour contributors working with livestock as well as the land, and both organic and non-organic enterprises were included.

The only criteria required of the respondent were that they were; a farmer who employed hired labour and/or agricultural contractors; a farm worker in one of the stipulated forms (full-time, part-time, seasonal, apprentice, volunteer); or an agricultural contractor. Each of them had to currently work directly on the land[6] .

In order to provide complete anonymity for all participants, the decision was made not to provide pen portraits for each case study respondent, although this has been done for the 17 participating farms[7] (Appendix G).

[5] Covering the Brampford Speke, Cowley and Upton Pyne Wards of Devon
[6] Even if their official status was retired
[7] The farm ID in no way correlates to respondent IDs

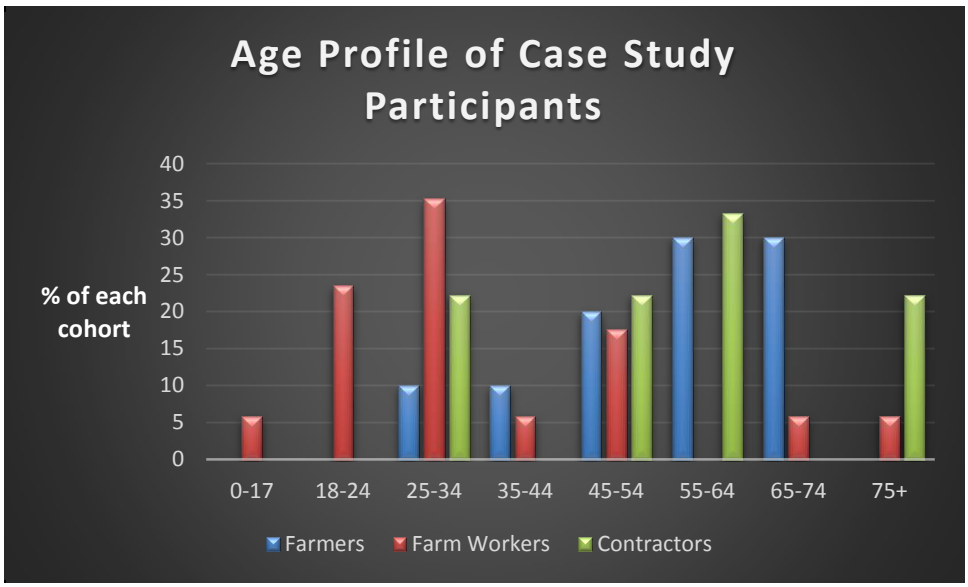

Figure 5.1. Age profile of case study participants

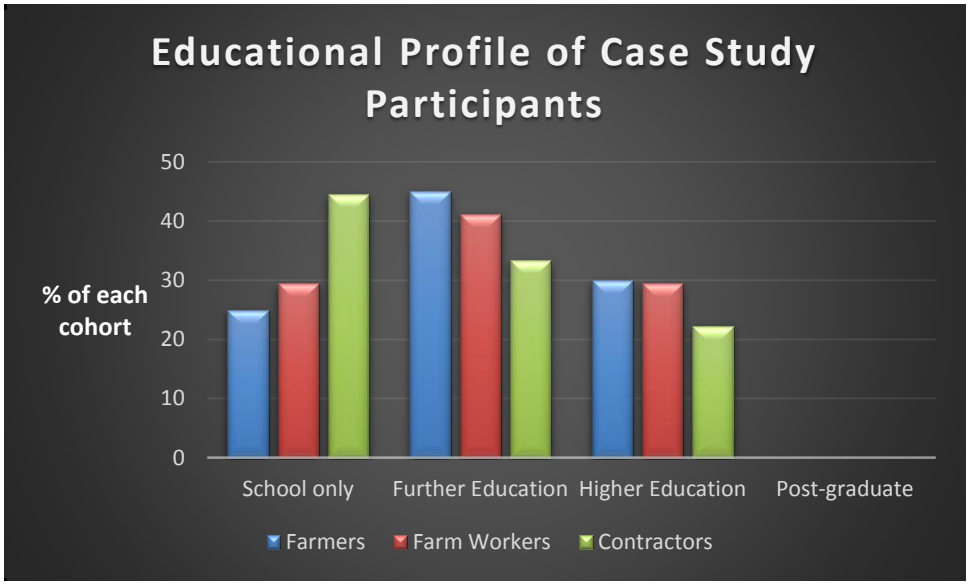

Figure 5.2. Educational profile of case study participants

Instead, the figures above demonstrate the age and educational profiles for the case study participants. Further case study aspects are compared and analysed throughout the analysis chapters, such as distance of the place of employment from home and family backgrounds.

5.3 Devon as Research Location

Selfa et al (2010) describe Devon as 'a region where agriculture is central to the iconography of the area and yet is under threat by environmental and economic challenges' (ibid: 595). Situated in the southwest of England, Devon's varying landscape incorporates two National Parks, noted for their moorlands, as well as rugged coastline and a rolling topography of farmland. Selfa et al (2010) describe the

region as being 'dominated by grassland systems' and at the same time a 'highly valued landscape, encompassing a number of important designations' (ibid: 600), both factors which contribute to high levels of tourism and in-migration. Although not exclusive to Devon; bearing in mind that Newby's farm workers remonstrated against newcomers as early as the 1970s, in-migration has been cited as a contentious factor in the region by numerous commentators (Selfa et al 2010; Lobley et al 2005; Ward and Lowe 1994).

Clutterbuck (2013) distinguishes between two types of farms in the UK. To the east exists what he terms 'plantation agriculture'; usually large-scale and mono-cropped, and to the west the predominant 'family farm'. Devon is a patchwork of farming systems, representing dairy, cattle and sheep farming, as well as some arable. It is also largely run by small-scale family enterprises and has a rising rate of contractors (Parry et al 2005). Various enterprises have already been identified where a variety of categories of labour are used, making Devon an ideal area for research cases. Newby (1977) established East Anglia as preferable for his research due to the proliferation of agricultural workers in the area at that time. The South West of England emerged recently as the region employing the largest number of farm workers in the country, according to Defra's definition, solidifying its suitability as a research area (Figure 5.3).

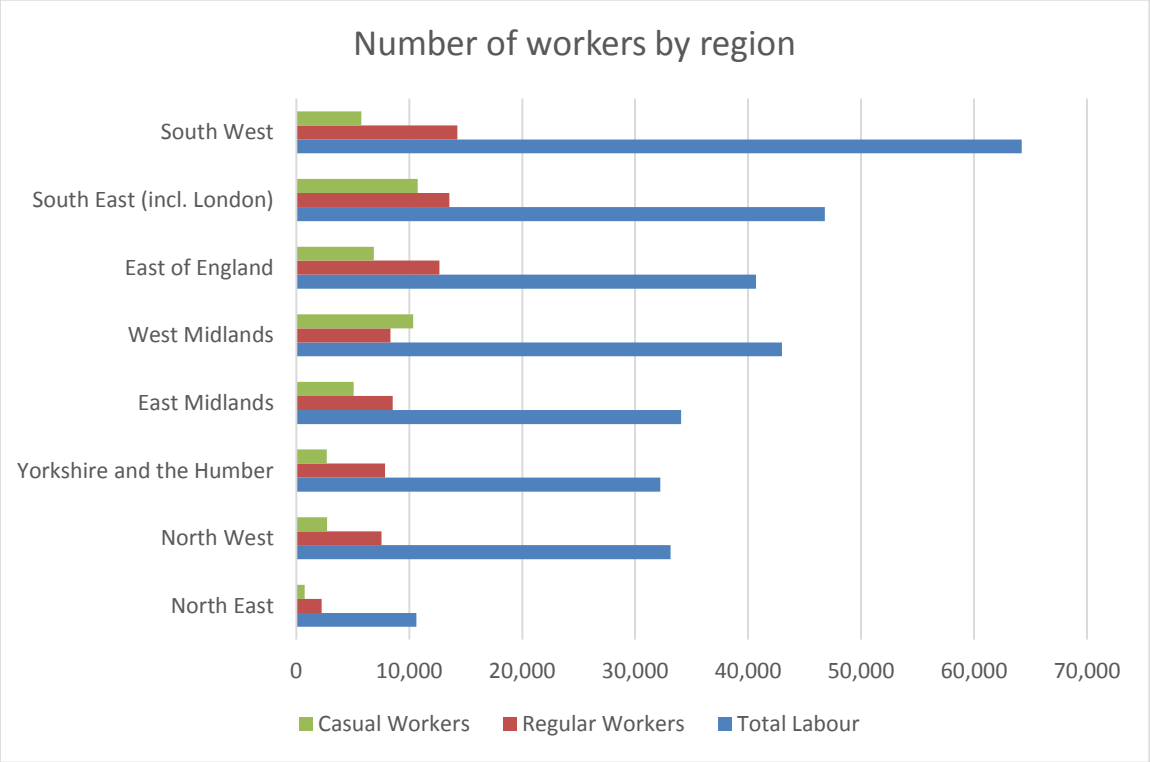

Figure 5.3. Number of hired agricultural workers by region (*Source*: Defra 2015)

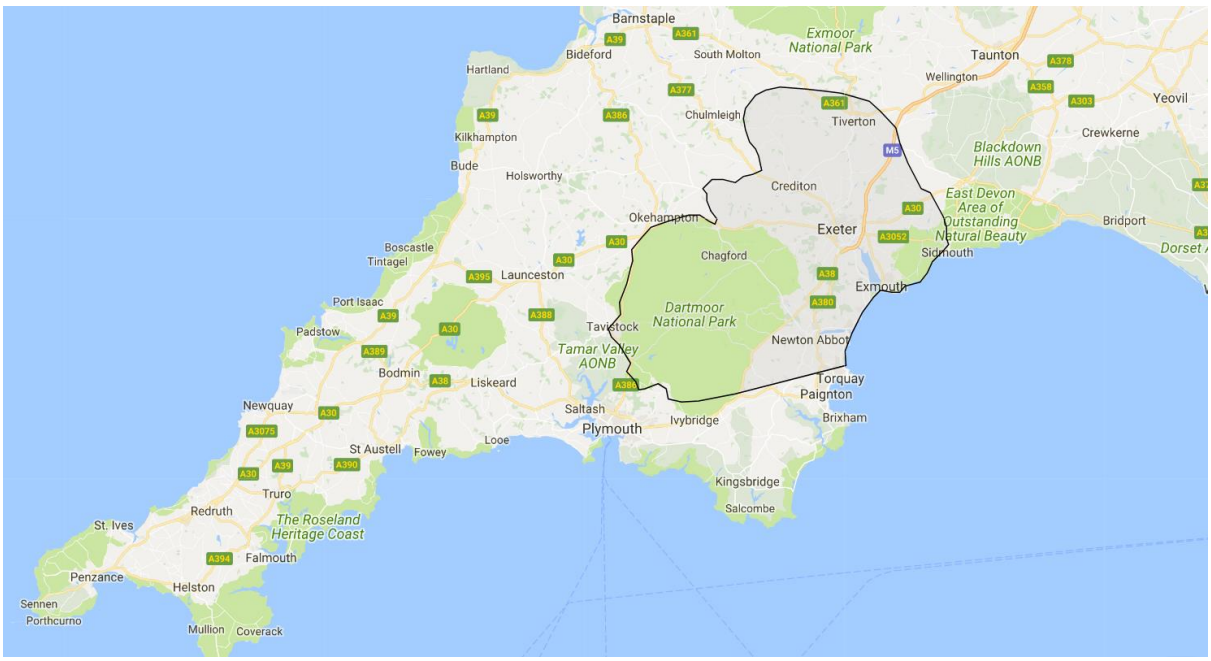

Figure 5.4. Study location for FLC case studies (*Source*: Map Data ©2017 Google)

Due to the breadth of types of participants partaking in semi-structured interviews; farmers, farm workers and agricultural contractors, some of whom were not connected to any other respondent in the study, a study of one or more contiguous parishes was not deemed relevant for this research, so cases were sought throughout the east and mid Devon region (Figure 5.4). At the same time, although the postal survey covered the entire South West of England, as a research area this was considered too vast a research location for conducting qualitative interviews, due to reasons of timing, finance, and convenience.

5.4 The Interview

45 participants were interviewed between April – October 2016, an extended period of time due to a decrease in the availability of respondents during August and September, two particularly busy months in the farming calendar. A greater number of interviews had initially been anticipated but several respondents (farmers or contractors) who had agreed to be interviewed pulled out of the process citing time constraints. Two others who had responded positively to initial inquiries would not return emails or phone calls closer to the time of interview. Also, two farmers who had initially agreed to both be interviewed and allow their workers to be interviewed, changed their minds about their workers' participation following their own interview. One stated that the situation in the workplace was, at the time, slightly vulnerable, and the other informed me that most workers were on holiday at that moment. This thesis includes quotations from the wives of some participating farmers and contractors. Farmer's and contractors wives were often present for some or all of the interview process, occasionally making

contributions which have been included in the analysis. Their part in the business or lifescape of their husband and their contribution to the interview was deemed significant enough to form part of the analysis. Gasson and Errington (1993) argue that the role of farmer's wife is 'often under-estimated and under-valued' describing it as 'crucial to the success and survival of the farm family business' (ibid: 9-10).

The average interview length was 55 minutes, with the longest interview lasting one hour and 27 minutes.

All interviews with farm workers and contractors were one-to-one, apart from one interview where two contractors (father and son) insisted on being interviewed together, and were then joined by both of their wives, and one interview where a contractor and a farm worker requested to be interviewed together, citing 'shyness'. With regards to the farmer interviews, all were one-to-one except for three where two farmer partners were interviewed together. Described by Wilson et al (2016) as 'paired depth interviews', the process of interviewing two people at the same time and where interaction can occur between the two interviewees, these interviews also prove useful as they can provide 'more complete data as each interviewee fills in the other interviewee's memory lapses and gaps in the storytelling' (ibid: 1554). The limitations of paired depth interviews include the risk that one informant might dominate the conversation.

5.4.1 Location and Method

The researcher maintained a flexible approach to the interviewing process in terms of both time and location, in order to fit in with busy farming schedules and prevent alienation of potential respondents through asking them to travel away from work or home. Riley (2010) recognises that farm-based interviews offer 'both convenience for participants as well as allowing them to feel more relaxed in a familiar research location' (ibid: 653).

The interview location was usually dictated by the farmer or contractor, including for the farm worker if the farm worker was being accessed via the farmer. For farm workers who had agreed to participate and were not attached to a farmer-respondent, they dictated their own interview location. For the latter, this tended to be a living room at home. For the former, interviews were most often carried out at the kitchen table on the farm, in the living room, or in an office. Five interviews were carried out outdoors and one contractor was interviewed in a motorway café.

Interviews were frequently disrupted by farm-related emergencies, deliveries or visitors, or interrupted by family members or animals. But this was integrated into the fieldwork

experience and offered the researcher an additional insight into the lived experience of each participant. As stated by Riley (2010), it is ‘exactly such interruptions, such distractions, and such other people’ that his study on farm life histories sought to ‘embrace into the research encounter’ (ibid: 653).

Occasionally, where farm workers were accessed via their employer, the employer could at times be within hearing range of the respondent, possibly affecting their responses to certain questions. By being aurally present but not participating in the interview, the employer potentially acts as a contaminant to the interview process. However, the interviewer tried to account for and avoid this as much as possible.

5.4.2 Choosing the path of enquiry

As stated previously, three sets of questions were developed for each cohort, but with common themes threading through each, and with many questions intersecting. Apart from the basic personal questions introducing the interview procedure, the interview process followed an intuitive course of flow-like conversation rather than a rigid chronological structure. Often questions that had not been asked directly were answered through this kind of engagement, and if the researcher felt like the direction of the interview was moving too far away from the specified themes, she returned the interviewee back to the questions.

5.4.3 Interview themes

Themes were split into the following categories in order to attempt to collect demographic data and subsequently understand both the lived experience of the farmers as well as their perceptions of self and other agents in their lifescapes.

a) *The business, the respondent and their family*

   The acreage, type of farm and ownership status were noted for farmers; the employment status and job titles for farm workers and contractors, followed by details regarding hours worked, education, heritage, marital status, parental status/details of children and perception of farm work. Previous employment was also explored, and all respondents were asked ‘why farming/contracting’?

b) *Labour composition*

   Farmers were asked to give details of all workers who contributed to labour on their land, including whether housing was offered, discussing any changes in labour composition and examining the role of family, friends and neighbours on the farm. This theme developed queries regarding worker agency on the farm

as well as ideas regarding skill sets that might be missing. The role, if any, of contractors on the farm was explored, often resulting in a list of who did which job when, and where they came from. The recruitment of all types of labour was discussed followed by a deeper examination of desired qualities, skills and experience belonging to each type of worker.

c) *The situation at work*

Farm workers were asked additional questions regarding job satisfaction, factors related to leaving their place of employment and levels of contentment with training and education offered by the place of employment. Living and travel arrangements were discussed, as was their knowledge of, or involvement in, trade unions.

Contractors were asked about contracts, factors impeding their ability to work, competition, issues with payment and purchasing habits when buying new machinery.

Both farm workers and contractors were asked to describe how they thought their work situation compared, one to the other, including hours, benefits and general wellbeing.

Details regarding work-life balance were sought from all cohorts.

d) *Skills, knowledge and training*

Further questions regarding how much respondents valued different types of knowledge, such as local or universal, were asked. This often led to the respondent revealing attitudes and perceptions towards local or national agricultural colleges or universities which encouraged the researcher to include this theme for later interviews.

e) *Labour shortages*

Respondents were asked their thoughts on the availability of labour, and where a shortage was stated, asked to express their more general thoughts on why they thought a labour shortage in agriculture was occurring and what might be done to counteract it in the future.

f) *Relationships – Human actants*

Farmers were probed regarding their relationships with farm workers and or/contractors, and queried as to what might contribute to a ‘happy workforce’.

Farm workers and contractors were asked whether they felt valued by the farmers employing them, whether they felt that health and safety was important to said employer, and whether they had considered leaving agriculture as a career. Both cohorts were also queried regarding job security. These two cohorts were also asked their opinion on the 'key to a happy workforce'.

Any issues arising from these relationships were also sought to be examined.

g) *Relationships – Community*

Respondents were asked about the length of time they had been a part of the community, followed by probes into their levels of community engagement and attitudes towards other community members (including newcomers). They were asked as to how responsible they felt towards their community and how this was demonstrated through action. Conflict also acted as a theme in this section. All respondents were asked how they believed themselves to be perceived by others, both locally and more nationally.

h) *Relationships – The land/Local environment*

Respondents were asked if they felt connected to their farms/the farms they worked on, the land and the surrounding landscape, and were asked to describe any feelings of responsibility towards the local environment and how this might be demonstrated through action or pro-environmental activities. Opinions on whether agricultural technology was better for the environment or worse were examined and themes around nature-connectedness explored.

i) *Understandings of the term 'sustainable intensification'*

Respondents were asked whether they had heard of the term 'sustainable intensification' and if so, were asked to define what it meant to them. If unable to describe it, the researcher explained the meaning, and followed this by asking if the respondent believed it to be possible or not.

j) *The future of agricultural labour in the southwest of England*

The final theme questioned respondents as to their opinions regarding the future of agricultural labour in the southwest of England. They were probed as to what the situation might be like for each cohort and why, and asked what ultimately, this might mean for the future of both their business and the industry as a whole.

5.5 Data Analysis – NVivo and SPSS

Due to the requirements of the research questions, it was decided that the quantitative data should be examined in terms of its descriptive attributes over and above seeking statistical significance. The purpose of the study is not to understand necessarily why correlations exist between variables, or if one variable is a function of another, but to present a pictorial snapshot of labour composition of farms in the South West and subsequently allow findings to emerge from an inductive analysis of qualitative data.

The aim of the research is not to generalise regarding components or aspects of agricultural labour, but to offer an in-depth empirical analysis of contemporary farm labour with an emphasis on how the network of agents interrelate and act upon the opportunities and capacities available to the farm labour contributor. The quantitative data acts as a structured reference point around which more normative values and understandings can be developed.

The overriding purpose of the research is to give a voice to all farm labour contributors and present a vision of their lifescape from their own perspective.

5.5.1 IBM SPSS Statistics V. 24

Basic descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts and cross-tabulations were calculated to provide an overview of the composition of labour on the 1251 responding farms, including numbers of types of labour employed, numbers of women employed, and nationalities. Some of these variables were cross-tabulated with either farm size and/or farm type in order to identify any patterns. Similar calculations were also made for availability of different types of labour and skills sets that farmers would like to see more of in the agricultural workplace. It was decided during the analysis stage that some of the survey questions on the survey were either not sufficiently worded or designed to be of use to the achievement of answering the overall research questions, and have therefore been omitted from the remainder of the study. Most questions were pre-coded preventing delays in the analysis stages.

5.5.2 QSR NVivo

The qualitative analysis software, NVivo, allows the researcher to ‘transform raw data (text, auditory, visual) into more meaningful segments and concepts that respond to the questions posed in a study’ (Bernaeur et al 2013: 6). An inductive approach was implemented with the use of NVivo, coding themes from transcripts that had been imported into the software according to topics and themes that arose through the chronological reading of each document. The researcher attempted to avoid a priori coding due to the exploratory nature of the research. This allowed for new or

unexpected themes to reveal themselves and create new nodes outside of the original themes, some of which were incorporated into the final analysis, while at the same time demonstrating the lack of importance or relevance to the study of some of the original themes identified by the researcher. Due to the inductive nature of the qualitative analysis that was undertaken, an element of grounded theory formed a part of the overall approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

5.6 The Question of Ethics

Ethics approval by the SSIS Ethics Committee was required before any field work could be executed. Approval was gained through the successful submission (see Appendix H for the *Certificate of Ethical Approval*) of an application detailing the aims of the study, the proposed methods to be implemented during fieldwork, a portrait of the anticipated respondents, and information regarding consent. Possible researcher and participant harm, as well as details of confidentiality and anonymity were also considered.

The Voluntary Nature of Participation

Participants were all recruited on a voluntary basis. However, the researcher needed to be aware of the possibility of subsequent coercion of workers to participate in the research by the land manager, and also the possibility of influence by said manager over behaviour or interview answers in the researcher's presence. The researcher attempted to lessen the likelihood of either occurring by being consistently sensitive throughout the recruitment process and ensuring the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation was made clear to all.

Although the possibility of encountering illegal activities during this research was minimal, a small risk existed. This was dealt with by consistently reminding participants not to disclose anything illegal in the presence of the researcher. The researcher committed not to pass any details on to a third party unless anything was disclosed by the respondent pertaining to offences under prevention of terrorism legislation (disclosures now covered by Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989).

Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity

Consent for the survey was assumed on the return of the questionnaire to the researchers. With regards to the qualitative methods, consent was obtained in a written format prior to the interview. A standard consent form was provided for this purpose (Appendix I), which explained that all information obtained from the interviews would remain strictly confidential. Participants were also informed that the data from the survey would be reduced to a numerical format, and where any quotations from the

qualitative interviews were used, that they would be anonymised through the use of ID tags such as Farmer 1, Farmer 2 and so forth. Participants were ensured that names, addresses and farm holding numbers would not be made publicly available or appear anywhere in the final thesis or in subsequent journal articles. Participants of the case studies were informed that all data obtained via interviews would be anonymised and stored according to the Data Protection Act's (1998) eight core principles. The researcher achieved the original intention of interviewing the land manager and the agricultural worker (of every 'type') separately from each other, apart from in one case where a farmer was in the same room as a farm worker for five minutes at the beginning of an interview.

Participants were assured that the researcher would not make the collected data available to any of the other participants, but were reminded that if somebody was deemed to be in significant and immediate danger then confidentiality might be broken.

Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to themselves.

The Informed Nature of Participation

To ensure the participants were adequately informed about their role in the research and how their data would be used, the consent form included a concise and understandable description of the research, including the conceivable risks and benefits to them. This consent form also contained the researcher's university contact details, allowing the participant to be able to contact the researcher following the interview/observation, should they want to ask questions regarding the research. It was not anticipated that research carried out with farm workers, ex-farm workers or agricultural land managers would result in either physical pain or psychological distress beyond that occurring in usual day-to-day life. Therefore the risk to participants was estimated to be low. However, the possibility existed for difficult or distressing issues to come up during the interview process, as a result of either attachment to the farmland, towards people with whom they worked/used to work, due to changes that have occurred within agriculture during their lifetime (such as political power shifts or the dissolution of the Agricultural Wages Board) and/or possible relationship issues between participants. Such stimulation of emotions may have incited some negative emotions, such as sadness, stress or anger. The researcher demonstrated sensitivity towards these possibilities in order to minimise any risks, and ensured that all participants knew that they were able to withdraw from the process at any time. Risks were dealt with sensitively by the researcher by allowing each participant time and space in answering, and by not pursuing answers to questions that looked to cause

discomfort to the participant. The flexibility and open-structured nature of the semi-structured interview process gave the participant some control over what they chose to disclose.

Interviewing agricultural workers and their managers could, if a worker or manager expressed dissatisfaction with their situation, have had negative implications for both, resulting in either dismissal or a worker leaving the holding. This would impact upon the economic stability of both. Therefore, all participants were interviewed separately to one another (apart from where otherwise stated) and all data has been anonymised in order to avoid any potential risks as much as possible

With regards to the researcher, there was not considered to be any potential for harm resulting from the survey as the research was carried out via the postal system by a team of experts. In terms of the qualitative research, spending time on agricultural holdings meant that agricultural machinery and livestock presented potential risks, although these risks were relatively low. Any potential dangers were discussed with the land manager if needed. Further anticipated risks to the researcher included the fact the she might be conducting interviews alone and on participants' private property. Any such risks were managed by the researcher informing supervisors of home visits by email with dates and details of where the interview was to be conducted and by confirming safe return.

Common sense played an important role in risk-avoidance for all of the qualitative methods outlined above.

The geographical location of each holding was specific to Devon, but not necessarily to the same area of Devon, which helps participants on different holdings remain anonymous from one another. Any potentially identifying information regarding a farm has been changed or omitted in an attempt to maintain anonymity, such as changing the location or factual description (such as size) of the farm, for example. Discretion has been employed at all times during and after the research. However, due to the nature of the study and the 'cases' being chosen according to their differing uses of labour, the scale of the research might mean that it is still possible to identify participants. Participants were made aware of this on the consent form.

5.7 Being a woman from a non-farming background – some positional and ethical considerations

Qualitative research has moved away from strict attempts at objectivity and impersonality towards a more reflexive approach, recognising that 'the intersubjective nature of social life means that the researcher and the people being researched have

shared meanings' that rather than acting as a hindrance, can actually prove to be advantageous in the research process (England 1994:243). According to England (1994), 'reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork; it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions' (ibid: 244).

With regards to this research, the role reflexivity performs also requires augmentation by the recognition of how informants 'may position you, the researcher, in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual identity and class' (Plowman 1995: 20). Knowledge production throughout the rural research process must be understood with both of these facets in mind. Pini (2004) adds that 'we need to be aware of the limits of any reflexive journey we may take and seek to incorporate into our reflexive process some of the ambiguities of identity work in the process of research' (ibid: 170). In her study of gender relations in the Australian sugar industry, Pini applies Stanley and Wise's concept of one's own 'intellectual autobiography' (1990: 47) to her fieldwork. She recognises that the various different identities she inhabited outside of that of an academic proved important to her informants, such as that of farmer's daughter, an Italian-Australian, 'a nice country girl' and as a woman. Interestingly, her feminist identity was not brought to the fore during the research, assuming that it would create negative connotations amongst her participants and detract from the positive relationship that had been built up via the other, less 'otherly' identities. On later reflection, Pini remarks that this possible deception regarding the feminist aspect of her identity means that her 'reflexive journey on this issue is not complete' (Pini 2004: 175).

Aside from reflexivity, gender relations also call for a consideration of researcher safety. Chiswell and Wheeler (2016) consider the 'acceptable and intolerable behaviours' (ibid: 229) exhibited by interviewees in the rural interview research process and how factors such as the isolated nature of rural locations, the blurred line between work and public space on a farm holding, and the 'social demographics and cultural characteristics' of farming communities can all contribute to 'certain risks, biases and subjectivities' (ibid: 230). They examine the ethical implications of accepting unwelcome comments from farmers based on the age and gender of the researcher but admit that the 'need to secure interviews left us disinclined to challenge such comments from otherwise obliging farmers – a decision which arguably compromised our own feminist values' (ibid: 232). They also mention how their age and gender meant that their 'role in the interview was largely defined by the subordinate position constructed' for them by the, generally older, male participants (ibid: 232). However, their 'unthreatening' position also allowed a less formal dynamic that may not have been offered to older, male colleagues. The position of this researcher as a relatively young woman who doesn't come from a farming background over and above several

years working on organic farms incited a similar response. Examples of unwelcome behaviours include the following verbal exchanges during two separate interviews.

> Farmer Y (an older man): There's sheep on the road
>
> [Interviewee, a young man in his 20s, leaves to deal with sheep]
>
> Farmer Y: You'll have to come back and give him a kiss in a minute

> Interviewer: I have struggled to get hold of people to interview sometimes
>
> Farmer Z: I would have thought you just bat your lashes and they would have come running

Examples of non-verbal inappropriate behaviours included one young interviewee removing his top to reveal his torso half way through an interview, and another farmer sending a flirtatious follow-up text post-interview. All of these behaviours were either ignored or dismissed by the researcher in order to preserve her professional continuum, but also due to the snowball sampling method incorporated to recruit new respondents, as well as the infamous gossip networks that operate within the agricultural community, the decision not to respond or react was a pragmatic one.

Various methods of mitigation are suggested by Chiswell and Wheeler (2016) to avoid safety risks during research on farms, such as the use of a shared outlook calendar, using common sense methods regarding time and place of interview and some level of reliance upon instinct.

In recognition of this, aside from the earlier specified research methods to be employed in this study, I also maintained a journal throughout, recording observations, emotions and occurrences around these issues and examining the ethical implications of how I chose to interact with informants and via which identities.

Almost all farmers asked why I was doing PhD and if I was from a farming background. No farm workers or contractors asked me this but I often felt the need to tell them my history of farming in order to validate myself.

5.8 Limitations

Emphasis in this thesis is on those actors who contribute directly to labour on the land. However, the boundary is blurred as to how directly other actors who have not been chosen as participants have not been chosen to be interviewed, such as veterinarians, agronomists, and AI specialists. Contractors were chosen amongst all external actors

who contribute to the farming system as they are those who perform the work which directly replaces work performed previously by traditionally hired workers. This does not mean that the work of other actors does not either contribute directly to land-based work or decision-making processes on the farm.

Another limitation in the approach is that the survey data applies to the South West region of England, whilst the interview data is limited to Devon. Whilst largely similar with regards to farming systems, variations do exist between counties and even individual parishes which include such variables such as topography, types of farming system, ruralness, and possibly even cultural differences.

Although the interview guiding framework proved effective overall, a pilot study might have highlighted the issues with incorporating Gosling et al's (2010) modified scale, allowing the author to omit this from the interview experience and prevent any possible discomfort experienced by participants.

And a final limitation worthy of mention is that of how the transcription of audio-recordings was, for two participants, not able to be completed fully. This was due to the very strong Devon dialects belonging to both respondents, preventing a minor number of indistinguishable comments from being included in the final transcripts.

5.9 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the methods used in this study, justifying the reasons for selecting a mixed-methods approach and the region of study, and describing sampling techniques and challenges. It explores the strengths and limitations of both survey methods and semi-structured interviewing as well as summarising the software packages and tools employed to analyse data; principally SPSS for the quantitative data, and QSR NVivo for the qualitative data. This is followed by a consideration of the ethical practices that were applied to the research design and process, followed by a discussion regarding reflexivity in the field.

The following chapter introduces an analysis of the results of some of these methods, establishing who is providing labour on agricultural holdings in the South West, in terms of type of worker, gender and nationality, and establishes the current situation on farms with regards to both labour requirements and availability.

Chapter Six: The Situation on the Farm: Identifying the Frontline Worker and the Emergence of a New Worker Profile

6.0 Introduction

In recognition of the fact that the current labour situation in the agricultural workplace is changing in terms of both the actors performing the labour, and how these different actors engage with one another, this chapter begins by offering an analytical platform from which to approach the initial research question: What is the situation on the farm? It begins with a description of the composition of labour on the 1251 farms who responded to the survey in the South West Farm Survey, building a simple quantitative framework upon which the rest of the thesis will rest. These results provide quantifiable justification for the choice of cohorts selected as case studies.

The remainder of the chapter provides an analysis of the qualitative data to construct a more nuanced picture around the quantitative findings that are assimilated into this and the following three chapters. In order to understand the significance of the changes in farm labour composition that are presented in the first section of this chapter, the multiple threads that connect farmers, farm workers and contractors to one another are unpicked, and both perceptions of the 'other' as well as the self with regards to the employment situation are examined. Relationships between the three different farm labour contributors are explored, illustrating the emergence of independent and interdependent relationships between the different cohorts. And finally, because the significant contribution of non-human actants to the realm of the farm labour contributor was firmly established by the majority of the respondents, some of these will also be highlighted in order to begin to illustrate the wider actor network of the respondents.

6.1 Farm Labour Composition in the South West: 1251 Farm Responses

As indicated in Chapter Two, the decline in farm labour according to figures provided by Defra (2016) over the last ten years, has generally halted. This is the case for both England and the South West. According to Defra, farm labour contributors made up 2.24 per cent of the South West's regional workforce in 2015 (Defra 2017c).

Analysis of the postal survey demonstrates that 38 per cent of farms surveyed currently employ traditional workers full-time, whilst 30 per cent employ part-time workers and 25 per cent employ casual workers. Only 4 per cent of farms surveyed employ apprentices with a slightly larger number employing volunteers at 6 per cent.

Overall, the incidence of part-time workers is higher than any other category of worker[8] (Table 6.1)

[8] Apart from contractors, for which actual numbers were not recorded

Table 6.1

Total number of each category of worker reported by all farmers who responded to this question in the survey

Type of worker	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Apprentice	Volunteers
Total	1245	5474	739	50	101.5

Source: South West Farm Survey

Worker Nationalities

Only 12% of farms in the South West Farm Survey recorded the employment of migrant workers (Figure 6.1), demonstrating that domestic workers still constitute the majority in the labour market.

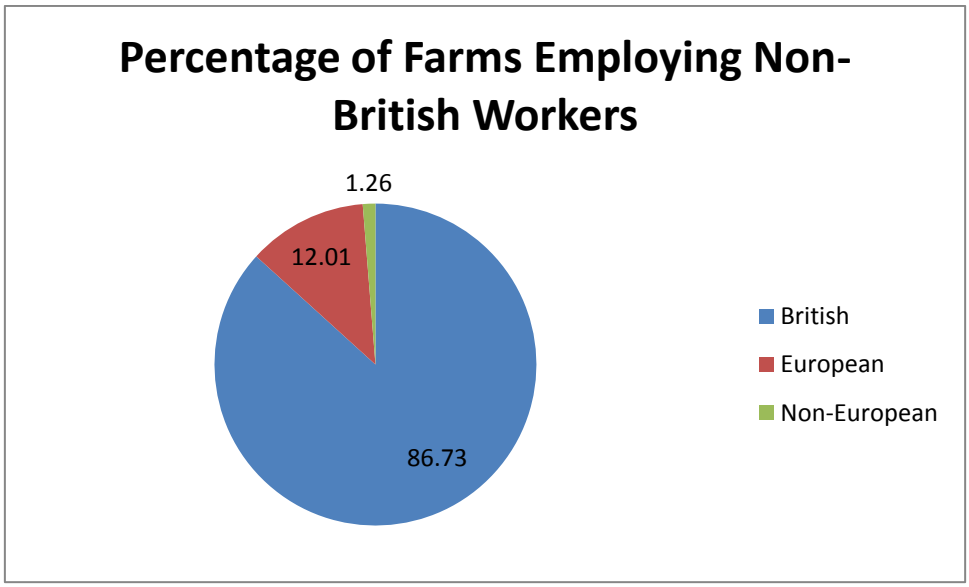

Figure 6.1. Immigrant share of labour force in South West England (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

The bulk of these workers, as shown in figure 6.2, are Polish or Romanian, but numerous other nationalities, both European and non-European, also contribute to the diversity of the workforce.

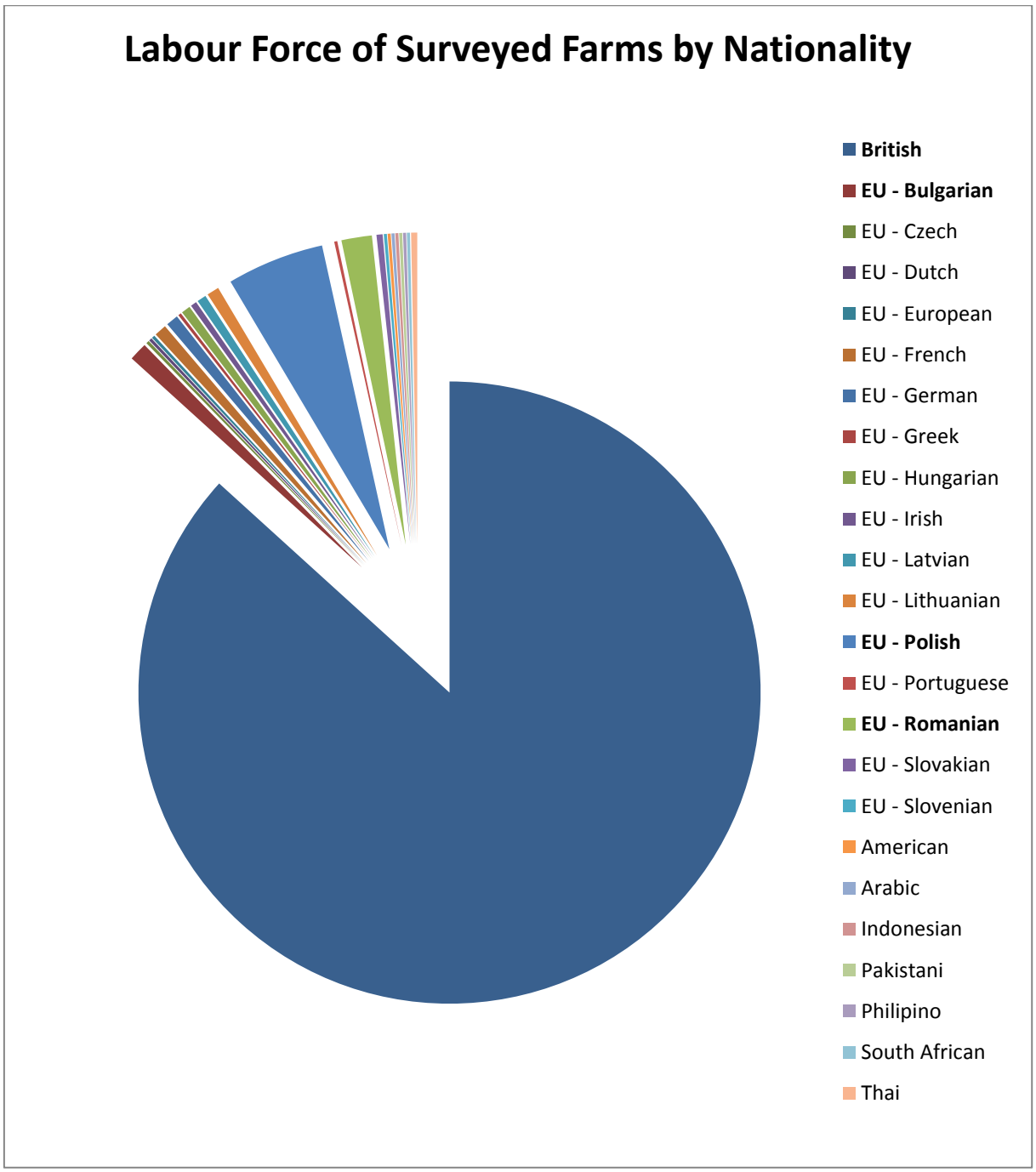

Figure 6.2. Percentage of farms employing migrant workers, by nationality (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

This data represented in Figure 6.2 does not delineate between counties, but it is known that Cornwall is one of the larger representative counties in the South West employing migrant labour, due to its higher incidence of horticultural holdings. The incidence of domestic workers is likely to be a higher percentage in Devon due to fewer horticultural units. This certainly proved the situation on case study farms where non-British workers were rare, and migrant workers constituted two workers from New Zealand, one from Spain and one from Poland. Numbers of casual workers were also comparatively low.

Changes in labour composition

Over the last five years, where applicable, 17% of farms surveyed reported an increase in hired labour, 20% reported a decrease, and 63% of farmers stated that there was no change in the level of employed labour on their farm. It is important to bear in mind that some stating a level of 'no change' might not employ any internal labour at all. With regards to family labour, 18% of farmers reported an increase, 13% a decrease, and 69% of farmers stated that there was no change. And finally, 22% of those surveyed declared an increase in their use of contractors, 11% a decrease, and 67% stated that their level of contractor use remained unchanged (see figure 6.3). These results demonstrate a greater increase in the use of contractors than other forms of labour over the last five years.

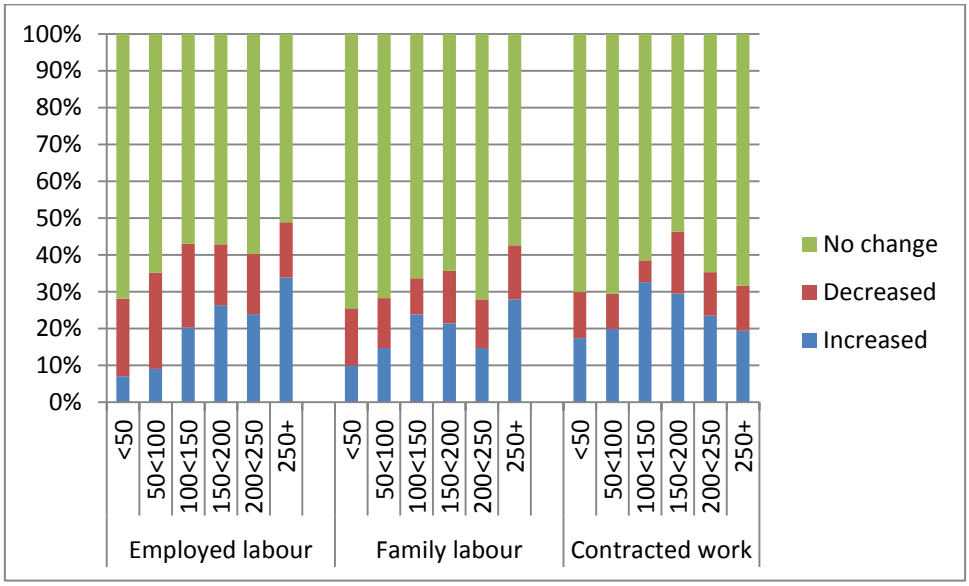

Figure 6.3. Incidence of farm labour change in last five years by farm size (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

Anticipated changes in labour use in the next five years show that 14% of farmers expect to increase the use of employed labour, 9% expect to decrease the level of employed labour, and 77% expect to see no change. Regarding family labour, 11% of farmers expect to increase the use of family labour, 11% expect to decrease the level of family labour, and 78% expect to see no change. A slightly higher frequency of contractor use is expected where 14% of farmers foresee an increase in their use of contractors, 8% a decrease, and 78% expect to see no change (Figure 6.4). It appears that smaller farms have been, and will be seeing in the near future, a lower incidence of change with regards to labour on their farms compared to medium to large farms.

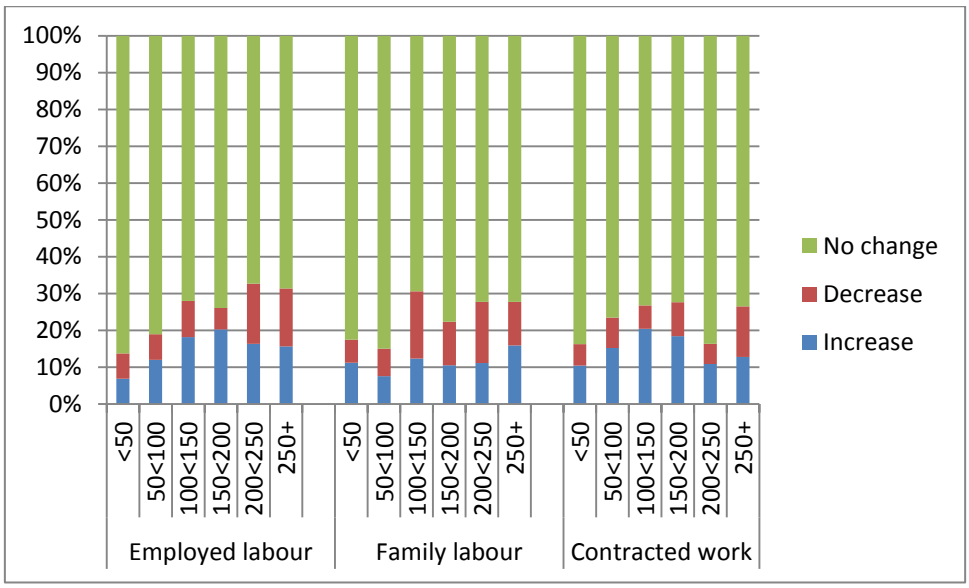

Figure 6.4. Expectations of farm labour changes in the next five years, according to farm size (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

Incidence of contractor use

Out of the 1251 farms surveyed, 87% stated that they now use contractors[9], and this number was consistent across all farm sizes and farming systems (see figures 6.5 and 6.6). Contractors often carry out one hundred per cent of the following tasks; hedge-cutting, combining, silage-making, ploughing, sowing, drilling and pesticide application, all jobs which twenty to fifty years ago would have been performed by farmers and/or farm workers. It should be noted that these are also the jobs which can directly affect soil, field perimeters, and therefore the environment and wildlife beyond the boundary of the farm. Responsibility evolves as a consequence of such a role, the significance of which will be explored in the ensuing chapters.

Lobley et al (2002) stated an incidence of 68% of farmers reporting the use of contractors in 2001. Although their survey included, but was not confined to an area of Devon, the reported trajectory both then and now of the likelihood of an even greater use of contractors in the future indicates that these numbers are likely to be representative of levels of contractor use at the time.

[9] This includes both use for specified tasks and whole enterprise farm contracting.

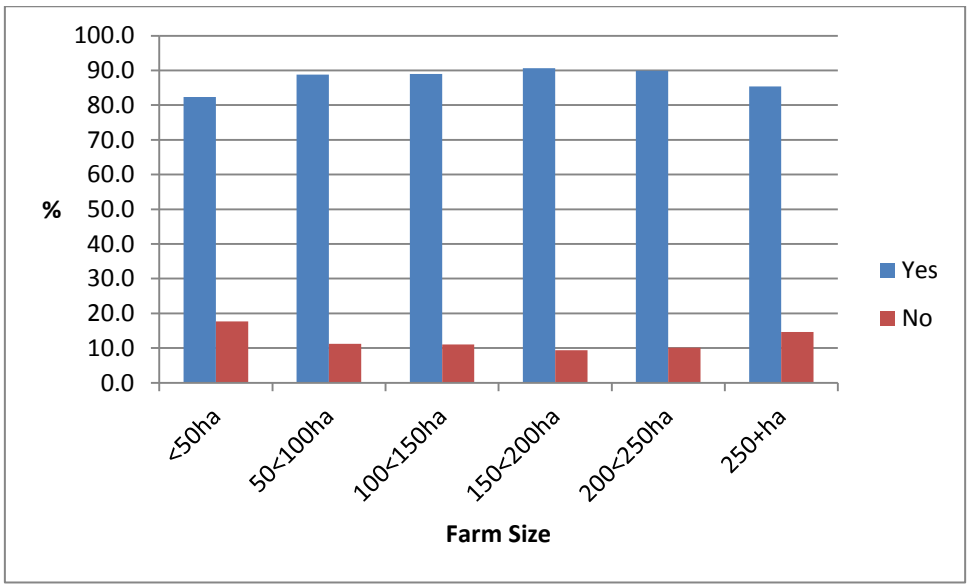

Figure 6.5. Numbers of farms using contractors according to farm size as a percentage of each category (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

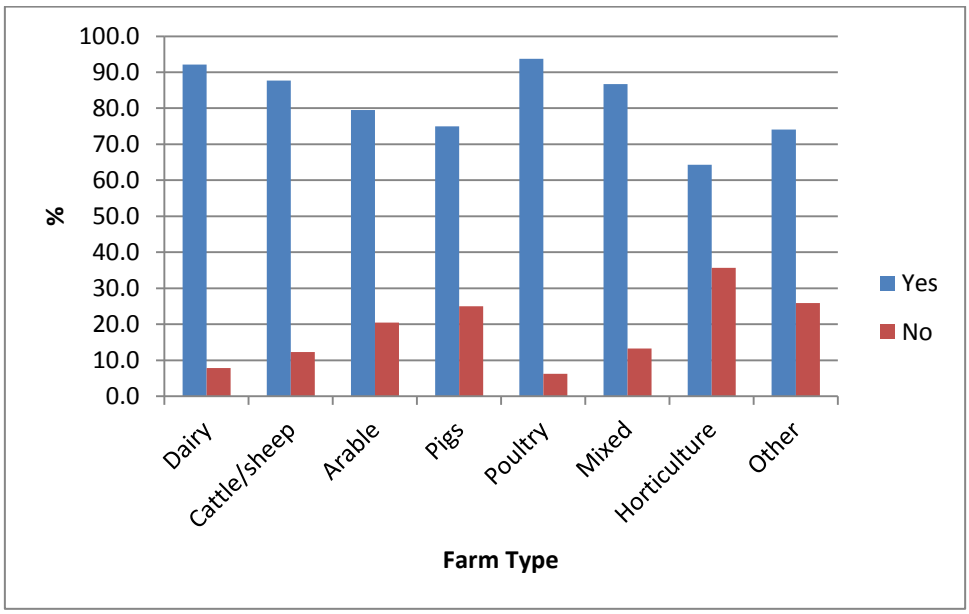

Figure 6.6. Numbers of farms using contractors according to farm type as a percentage of each category (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

Comparing Lobley et al's (2002) findings with those of the South West Farm Survey , it is shown that contractor use has increased by approximately 28% in the last 16 years, a trajectory that, according to the survey results, looks set to continue, and interviewed farmers report an increase in the number of tasks performed by contractors on their land.

Alongside this sustained rise, farms look set to slightly increase their use of employed labour, whilst anticipating that family labour requirements will remain the same. This slight increase is in alignment with aforementioned figures published by Defra (2017d) as well as forecasts of a spike in the labour requirements of the farming industry in the

UK as a whole (Farmers Weekly 2013). Such data accentuates the importance of the full-time and part-time agricultural worker to the industry, and corroborates the implication of this thesis that they remain a cohort worthy of research.

For these reasons, the farmer-farm worker-contractor nexus requires fresh examination from a new perspective. The next section pulls the attention away from the numerical aspects of farm labour in the South West towards the social implications of these market transitions.

6.2 Linking the Farm Labour Contributors: Horizontal Network Relationships

According to the ANT approach, relations are the process by which entities obtain their forms or performances. Noe and Alrøe (2012) state that 'the way the individual actor or element enters into the dynamics of farm processes and operations is not determined by the objects, but by the agency it obtains through the interactions' (ibid: 391). Examining the farming system from the ANT approach reveals how numerous entities are enrolled as 'actants' in each farm's network, including the farmers, farm workers, contractors, livestock, family members, machinery, land, weather, skills, knowledge and so forth. Some of these key relationships, the horizontal networks, are picked out in the next section of this chapter and interpreted according to the interview data. Due to the plethora of actors contributing to the farm labour actor network, this chapter will only examine farmers, farm workers, contractors, and livestock, with weather and the mobile phone also being considered here due to their role in relation to these actants. Owing to plentiful studies into farm family relationships (Gasson et al 1988), succession (Lobley 2010) and sibling conflict (Taylor and Norris 2000), families will be considered only in terms of work-life balance effects here. Subsequent chapters will bring in other actants according to their relevance to the topic of each chapter. The complexity of each network makes empirical analysis of every element impossible so in line with the focus of this thesis, those actants which surround labour are those which will be examined most fully.

6.2.1 Relationships Between Human Actants

6.2.2 The Farmer – Contractor Relationship

The work of the agricultural contractor represents a shift back to the specialisation of tasks and the principle of the division of labour that has preoccupied social theorists since the inception of social science. Marx and Engels (1844/2009) perceived an increased division of labour as a vehicle to alienate the worker from the product and the process of their work, linking work-related hostilities not only to the immediate structure of employment but also to the wider capitalist mode of production. Durkheim (1893/2014), however, saw the division of labour as an instigator to the formation of an

order where ‘organic solidarity’ was the outcome. According to Durkheim’s theory, ‘societies characterised by organic solidarity are held together by people’s economic interdependence and their recognition of the importance of others contribution’ (Giddens 2006: 14). Organic solidarity as a process follows the more pre-industrial concept of mechanical solidarity, which represents the more homogenous society sharing similar goals and values.

The peculiar nature of farming has led to the farm labour community establishing a type of solidarity that lies between mechanical and organic. There is a sense of shared beliefs amongst all participants, regardless of how linked they actually are, and yet through the (re)division of labour that the work of contractors exemplifies, a very clear pattern of mutual dependency has also been established.

The independent ideal often associated with the general contractor, where ‘with independence [comes] self-reliance’ (Barley and Kunda 2006: 50), in the case of agriculture, appears to become less independent and instead rather more interdependent. Barley and Kunda state that the life of a contractor is ‘characterised by a distinct temporal rhythm, a repetitive cycle of moving from the market to a job and then, back to the market’ (ibid: 49). Perhaps the case for early-entry contractors, this appears less to be the case for the established agricultural contractor, who rarely needs to advertise their services once a relationship has been established.

6.2.2.1 Attached and Detached Interdependence at the Farmer-Contractor Interface

The interdependent contractor

The relationship between the agricultural contractor and the farmer is more complex than that of a simple contractual relationship between two parties based on economic efficiency. A number of external agents, such as weather, market changes and competition (Figure 6.7), have necessitated the unique formation of relationships, as a fine and delicate line is walked by both parties; a balancing act towards ensuring the survival of their respective businesses. This has led to a reciprocal reliance on one another.

The contractor is almost[10] entirely reliant upon farmers for the survival of their business, and yet circumstances exist where they can afford to pick and choose their customers. This is due first to seemingly plentiful work availability.

> [Are you busy all year round?] Yeah [So you’ve got work all year round?] Yeah [But it’s just busier in the summer time?] Mmm. Not necessarily (Contractor 6)

[10] Other customers might include owners of private gardens or small-holdings, or local councils.

> [And you've got enough work?] Yep [Do you always have enough work?] Always (Contractor 7)

Secondly, poor customer behaviour, usually in the form of bad payment history, can on occasion act as a deterrent to a contractor returning to a location. Within the farming world, little acts in isolation from anything else, especially where members of the agricultural community are treated poorly by other members. Information is shared via gossip networks which can ultimately impact upon either 'bad contractors' or holdings notorious for non or slow payment.

> The chap that does my hedge-trimming has done some for [customer X]. And I said to him, you're mad, because you won't get paid. And I went over to him the other day with a cheque and I said, you're looking a bit glum, and he said it just reminded me that I haven't been paid by [customer X]. I said you won't, you know, they'll hang on as long as they can (Farmer 17)

Weather, as an agent, also provides significant leverage to the contractor and plays a key role in the importance of establishing relationships beyond those of normal contractual arrangements (Figure 6.7). Without access to a good contractor when the weather is right, a farm's productivity and thus profit can be severely jeopardised.

> There's always little niggles that they aren't quite available when you want them. You know, you can't make the snap decision that you're going to do something because the weather is going to change. You have to work with them. But on the other hand, if you give them plenty of notice and pay them, they usually do what they can to be there when you want them to be there (Farmer 10)

> You've gotta work with contractors really. You've gotta talk to them. You know, if I want a job doing I'll talk to [Contractor X] and I'll say, you know, like we'll be doing the maize harvesting soon and we'll talk about it, you know, he'll come and see the crop and we'll work out when he's gonna do it, and then we'll work together and he'll factor me in then. I rung up last week and I said oh, I could do with some rolling done on my grass arable ground, and he said oh I can't do it for a couple of days. And then if I'm gonna cut, like with [Contractor Y], he's doing my square bale hay or my silaging, I'll talk to him, I'll say, well I wanna cut some grass, can you bale, I was saying to [Contractor Y], can you bale at the end of the week or whatever, you know, I'm gonna cut today, you know, can you bale it up on Friday when it's dry or whenever it is. So, you can always work with a contractor so you don't ever get in a situation, oh my god, I've got no, I've just cut this grass down and I haven't got a contractor, so you work with them. You speak to them before you, you know, as you go along. So, it's not like a, I

don't ring up today and say I need you tomorrow or this afternoon, it's like you know, you know where you're going hopefully. That's the plan (Farmer 7)

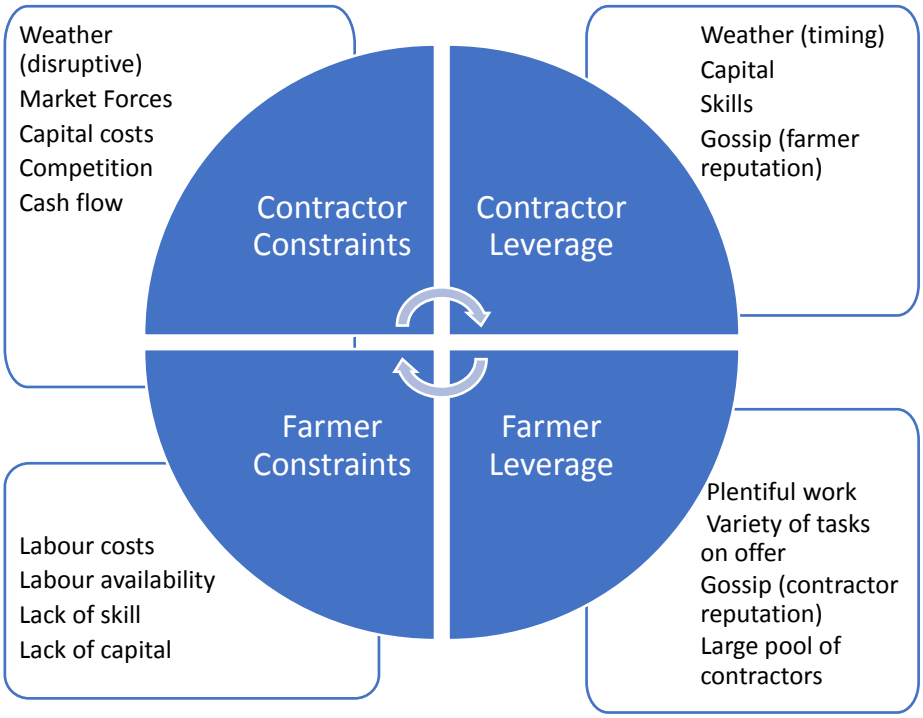

Figure 6.7: The power relationship between farmers and contractors

So, although numerous constraints are at play with regards to the economic, social and cultural aspects of the life of a contractor, to be explored further in the ensuing chapters, contractors do possess some level of power at the farmer-contractor interface.

The interdependent farmer

Lack of capital, skills and labour therefore mean that farmers are reliant on contractors; some more than others, but due to a currently saturated market, most are also afforded room to pick and choose who they hire.

> Within five miles of here, I could ring eight or ten contractors […] from small one-man bands that do a bit on the side to fully blown I've got all the kit and that's all I do. But yeah, I could pick up the phone and ring 8-10 contractors if I was desperate for a job to be done (Farmer 15)

> He was losing customers left right and centre [Really? Because he was charging too much?] Yeah, cos he was charging too much (Farmer 15)

All contractors interviewed currently rely on word of mouth to gain new customers so what is fed into the gossip networks is vitally important to the success of their business

With 87% of farms surveyed divulging their use of contractors, it is clear that a relationship of interdependence has developed between the two cohorts generally, regardless of the type of relationships maintained more specifically. However, different relationship patterns between farmers and contractors did emerge from interview data. Rousseau (1990) describes how 'when individual employees believe they are obligated to behave or perform in a certain way and also believe that the employer has certain obligations toward them', a psychological contract is formed (ibid: 390). He divides these psychological contracts into either 'relational' or 'transactional' depending on whether the transaction is purely economic and extrinsic (transactional) or involves both economic and non-economic exchanges, such as hard work and loyalty (relational) (ibid: 390). According to Peel and Boxall (2005), these categorisations theoretically suggest that 'contracts for services are more indicative of a transactional contract, and employment more readily lends itself to the development of relational contracts' (ibid: 1678). In practice, relationships between farmers and contractors prove much more complex than this.

Agricultural contractors are afforded tasks of enormous responsibility as they are working land and crops which, if mishandled, could cost a substantial proportion of their customer's profits.

> That contractor has just cost that 200-acre dairy herd [farm] between ten and fifteen thousand pounds, through actually ruining the grass and silage quality […] so what I'm saying is this, you are relying on those specialists contractors to get the job right (Farmer 19)

However, trust often appears to develop quickly and easily between the two parties and the work of many contractors is less likely to be carefully monitored once their abilities are proven in the first year. This pattern might eventually lead to a relationship belonging to one of the two branches of **attached interdependence**, or break off into one of **detached interdependence** (Figure 6.8).

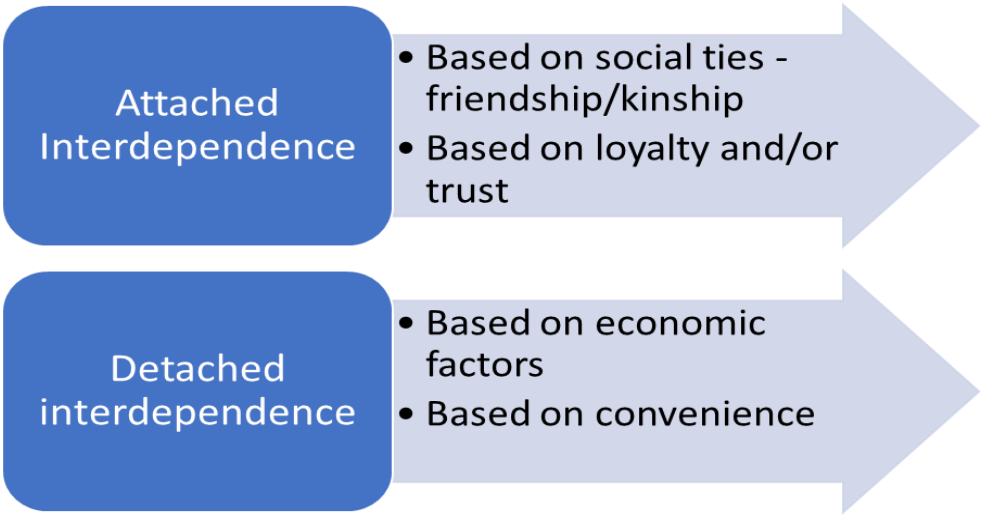

Figure 6.8: Possible relationships of interdependence between farmers and contractors

Farmer 16 describes these two different forms of interdependence;

> Sometimes it's just a sort of professional relationship where you ring them up out of a phonebook [**detached interdependence**], but usually it's through word of mouth, and again, you know, because that's the way we tend to work here, they become, it becomes personal [**attached interdependence**]. I remember talking to somebody once who used to say the old adage that you never do business with your friends, no, ridiculous […] You should always do business with your friends because if you're gonna give your money to somebody it should be somebody you like. And if ever you've got to spend time with somebody, it should be somebody that you like so I think that's a strong ethos. So all the contractors I use, you know, we get on, and again you've got that thing where maybe you get slightly more preferential treatment because you help them and they help you. And ok, you know, you pay them but it's still, it's a bit more personal than just a name out of a phone book (Farmer 16)

6.2.2.2 Attached interdependence

6.2.2.3 Friendship or Kinship Ties (Relational)

Two branches of attached interdependence reveal themselves from the data. One branch forms its basis around particularistic social ties, expressing a bond established through either friendship or kinship. These bonds mean that the predominant causal relationship link, in this case the social tie, might override other aspects of the relationship such as cost or quality of work.

> They're not massive contractors but they're family friends, I've always got on well with them (Farmer 2)

> I use my 92-year-old hedge trimmer, because he's part of the fabric of the place and he is still a pretty good hedge trimmer and even if he wasn't, I would still use him because I've known him all my life and I will rue the day when I will go to his funeral because I will have lost a friend and a character, and part of the history of the place. Because he knows so much (Farmer 16)

> He's a one-man band, and when I need him he comes and helps out. […] [You're never tempted to go for any of the bigger…?] I have used them in the past, but you know, you build up friendships with the people that you're using, and you know, that's worth more than a price, come the end of the day (Farmer 17)

Farmer 16 acknowledges the existence of the detached interdependence model but shows a significant preference for the more attached form of interdependence. The level of attachment shown by Farmer 16 to everybody who works on his holding is particularly personal, familial and paternal, regardless of whether that worker is a hired worker or a contractor. A description of a contractor sums this up.

> He's a nice guy. He's very, well I guess he's dyslexic […] and it's sort of the odd paradox where you get somebody who can work to such a high standard and yet has got that inability to put letters together, and you do kind of think, well this is ridiculous. You wanna sit down with a kid's book and teach him to read and write but I know it's not quite as simple as that. I use him whenever I can. I feel a strong connection to (Contractor X). I think he is a really good guy (Farmer 16)

The contractors are perceived not only in connection to the farmer, but also to a place and its history. The fabric he refers to is his lifescape and that of other farm labour contributors, a fabric made up of interwoven threads connecting all of the actors entwined in the agricultural networks linking economic, social and emotional factors to past, present and future.

This social relationship is often reciprocated by the contractor, demonstrated by distinguishing between 'people' and 'customers'.

> I have me favourite customers I would say, yeah, so [And are they your favourites because you've been with them for a long time?] Been with them a long time. I actually know them as people and not just as a customer (Contractor 7)

> [Some of them you call friends?] Yeah, if they've ever got a problem, they'll ring me up, [Contractor's name] can you give me a hand, yeah alright, I'll be right out, or whatever (Contractor 3)

> I'd like to consider them friends, yeah. I mean, I know it's a business. They're obviously running a business and we're running a business. It is a business relationship, but I'd like to think that they are friends yeah (Contractor 4)

Contractor 6's perception of friendliness extends beyond simply his customers to the surrounding area, another signifier of the lifescape aspect of the farm labour contributor.

> [Are any of them friends?] Yeah some of them are yeah. Yeah, it's quite a friendly area so… (Contractor 6)

6.2.2.4 Loyalty and Trust

Newby suggests that 'there is no reason to suppose […] that frequency of interaction between employer and employee in itself produces a more harmonious relationship' (ibid: 319), which leads us to the second branch of attached interdependence. This is based on relationships built upon a sense of loyalty and trust. This is displayed most evidently in the general lack of surveillance by farmers over the tasks performed by the contractor.

> You see different people. But very often you go out and do a job, I go out and do a job some places. You may see your customer when you get there, you may not. He tells you what you gotta do, you goes on and do's what you gotta do. I've got a place I do the job and don't even see the customer (Contractor 2)

The majority of contractors acknowledge the varying types of interdependence. Contractor 7 states how 'some of them leave you to it and the other one's will bring out a cup of tea for 'ee three or four times a day, and call around to see how you're getting on'. The sense of trust and loyalty displayed by most farmers, such as the example given by Farmer 16 earlier, is often reciprocated by the contractor.

> If the weather's rough and you get behind, that's when you're likely to get new people ringing up because everybody's behind and you can't always do it because you've obviously got your own customers to look after (Contractor 4)

> Yeah. It's having the interaction with your customers. You get some really really really nice people you work for and you wanna bend over backwards for them. You'd bend over backwards for anyone really. But it's those guys you really appreciate and really respect what their farm is like. And you look forward to going to their farms. [You do?] You think, oh, next Wednesday we're going there and it's like, yeah, yeah, it's really good there. [And when you go to people's farms, do you tend to interact quite a lot? Like, if you're due to do a job, do you see them a lot?] Some farmers you do, some you don't (Contractor 5)

Contractor 5 displayed a sense of loyalty that surpassed not only potential new clients but also responsibilities arising from his own holding, prioritising his customer's business over his own farm.

> It's a tendency, you know, some people say oh you can't do other people's work before your own. But it's just a natural of what comes in the cycle of that week, to get things done in the best order. So, that is the other stress for us, is like, oh we shouldn't be here we should be at home doing our own combining or something, we could be pushing our luck here [Who do you tend to put first? The customers or you?] The customers (Contractor 5)

The farmer trusts the contractor to perform the job in an efficient and timely manner. The contractor expects and trusts the farmer to pay for the service similarly (Figure 6.9). Both farmers and contractors acknowledge that often, the basis of their relationship is a power dynamic around timing, and it is off of this dynamic that the other elements of this kind of relationship stem.

> Paying them on time is probably the biggest incentive to get things done when you want them to get done (Farmer 10)

> I spend a fair bit of money with him now, so he (Contractor X) does my jobs in good time. And probably, the, you know, (Contractor Y) I don't spend as much money with him anymore, he's losing interest a little bit (Farmer 7)

> [Do you ever have to turn customers down?] Yes [And how does that make you feel?] Annoyed really […] cos once you've turned them down and they find somebody else and they're 'appy with 'em. They stay with 'em (Contractor 7)

> Some contractors will keep people waiting. I don't like keeping people waiting. And I'm a bit too honest. It's better to say yeah, I'll get there, than get there late. But I do lose a bit of work by doing that (Contractor 6)

> I never want to say no. Because if you say no, it's very difficult for them to ring again (Contractor 5)

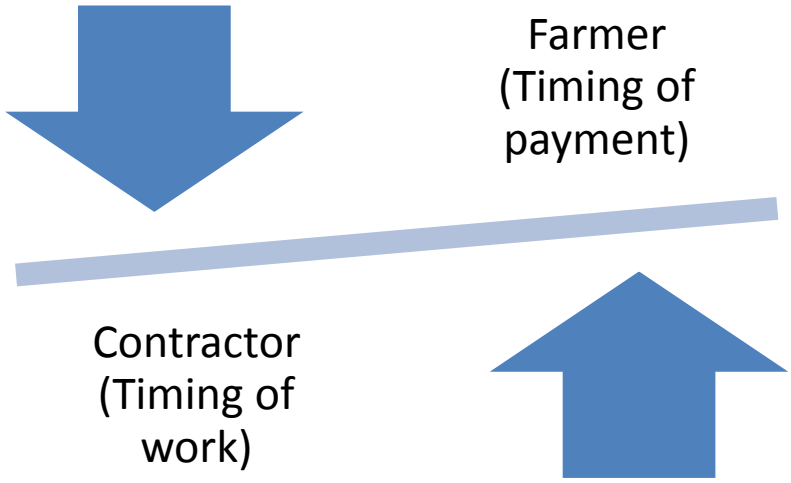

Figure 6.9. The delicate balance of the timing of both parties in relationship building

When this balance is not met, either adjustments are made by one or both parties to accommodate for this – **attached interdependence** - or one party suffers a negative consequence and seeks to establish a new relationship elsewhere – **detached interdependence**.

'Niceness' is occasionally associated with the leeway afforded to the farmer by the contractor where the power dynamic of timing is less prevalent. Favour can be won by contractors through leniency accompanied by loyalty.

> They're bloody good and they're nice people. And they bill once a year at sort of Christmas time, which suits my cash flow, rather than the bloke who does the ploughing and drilling. He's almost barely left the farm and the invoice is flying through the bloody door. And I said to him, the only way you stand a chance of getting the silage job is if you had the same billing approach as the others, because there's no way I'm gonna find that sort of money in the middle of June (Farmer 18)

Predictably, leniency, loyalty and most relationships of attachment were linked to the longevity of that relationship.

> You've got some people that you know, you been there for so many years you know they ain't gonna pay for two months anyway (Contractor 6)
>
> [Do you care about some farms more than others?] Yeah, you do, yeah, cos some of them you've known for years and, yeah, definitely (Contractor 6)

This form of attached interdependence built upon longevity has created patterns of multiple-hiring of contractors even on the smallest holdings. As the contractor requirements of a holding grow or change, new machinery and skills are required. But rather than adapt to the use of one contractor able to fulfil all tasks, most farmers will

continue to use previous contractors for certain tasks, and bring in other contractors to complete new requirements. This pattern mainly results from a loyalty obligation to an already existing relationship. Farmer 7 refers to the hiring of an older contractor as a favour rather than a contract, 'I *let* them do the round baling', even though 'they used to do all the work now they've lost it by being, like, poor contractors if you know what I mean'. Contractors perceive such multiple-hiring arrangements as frustrating if they possess the relevant machinery to fulfil all requirements on a holding and are persistent, with varying results, in attempts to win all of the work.

Many farmer-contractor relationships demonstrate a particularly long history, with some customers being passed from a contracting father to his contracting son or daughter, and equally succession in farming families often sees contractors being adopted by farm successors.

> [How many years has your oldest customer been with you?] Um, I started up on me own five year ago, but I took on a few of the customers what I used to work for previously through the other bloke, so some of the people I've been working for for ten/eleven years (Contractor 7)
>
> [How far back does your oldest customer go?] Oh, gawd [Anyone that was with your family before?] Oh yeah, yeah yeah. We've gone generations down, yeah. [So you've got customers that you've literally been with for…?] Yeah, and they've retired from farming several years ago, and their sons and daughters have retired since and got out of farming, some are still in farming (Contractor 8)
>
> [Right. And do you always use the same people?] I've used the spray chappy for the last 22 years (Farmer 17)
>
> [How old is your oldest customer, how long have they been with you?] 42 years [Have you got quite a few like that?] That's probably the oldest one. I've got several I've been going to for thirty years, yeah (Contractor 4)
>
> [How many years has your oldest customer been with you?] Just thinking which ones are left now…(name of customer), he must have been with dad, must be sixty years. He's about 85 now [Wow] We still do there, I mean his son's running it but he's still there [Right. Do you see him when you go there?] Yeah, usually we'll make a point of seeing him (Contractor 6)

Such patterns of succession in a business external to the farm and the family, emulate arrangements of succession on traditional family farm holdings (Lobley 2010) as well as entrepreneurial succession in cottage industries historically and today (Nordqvist and Melin 2010). Outside of a small number of industries, farming included, family

businesses might be perceived as ‘a reminiscence of the past’ (ibid: 213) but within the lifescape of the agricultural contributor the continuity of connections and relationships arising from this Jacob’s ladder effect prove significant to the overall network of each cohort. Attached interdependence relationships are passed down through the families of both types of farm labour contributor. This ensures not only the direct effect of continuity of human-human relationships, but also the indirect effect on human-land relationships.

6.2.2.5 Detached Interdependence (Transactional)

Detached interdependence retracts the personal element from the relationship. Each cohort remains dependent on the general existence and availability of the other but social ties and attachments play less of a role in the relationship. The more detached relationships usually occur when the ‘usual’ contractor is unable to take on a contract (a matter of convenience), when a farm is new to contracting, or if price, speed of completion, or specific machinery requirements is the primary driver in the decision-making process of the farmer. An inability or unwillingness to pay on time can also obstruct relationships of attached interdependence.

> [Why do you think you’re at the bottom of the pile?] Possibly because there’s lots of contractors and we have been traded off, you know, you turn up and do the baling, when it’s gonna rain Friday/Saturday. And you, you can get it in done for you on Thursday, yeah, brilliant job, thank you. They don’t pay. Next year, the next time, they ring someone else up, oh you couldn’t do some baling for me could you. Just to extend the payment. [So, you don’t get paid at all?] Oh yeah, we get paid in the end, yeah (Contractor 5)

Examples of detached interdependence were expressed by fewer contractors. This relationship does not depend just on one actor but on the relationship between both. So, Contractor 1 might have a relationship of detached interdependence with Farmer 1, but attached interdependence with Farmer 2.

The scale of detached interdependence is as variable as it is with the attached model, and there is often a blurring of each boundary. Loyalty, however, is often the interface at which the detached and the attached become hazy. Contractor 8 admits;

> I think I’ve got one or two customers I’ve never met. [Really?] I think there’s one or two, yeah (Contractor 8)

So, although he is completely detached from the customer physically, loyalty and hard work might still drive the psychological contract forward. Other comments from contractors suggest the temporal nature of some relationships, where economic circumstances prove goodwill to be finite.

> As I say the majority of ‘em is reasonably good. But we have got one or two that isn’t so good. [Have you ever had customers that just aren’t good at all and you just stopped doing the job?] Yeah, have done in the past (Contractor 3)
>
> Well, it just depends on the situation. We do sometimes. It all depends how bad they is. [But you’re pretty forgiving. You sound…] We got one customer now, what was it, for baling, not from this last baling, the year before. I thought they woulda paid but they haven’t. They don’t owe all of it but they owe some of it, and that. They haven’t paid none this year yet (Contractor 2)

His son hinted that this relationship would be unlikely to last if payment were not made.

In many instances, the farmer-farm worker relationship and the farmer-contractor relationship differed little. Few farm workers or contractors spend time socially off-farm with the employer.

> [And do you ever spend time socially with your customers?] Some and some, yeah [Ok. But it’s not like…] Yeah, you may see them at a meeting or something? [But you wouldn’t go out to the pub with them?] No (Contractor 5)
>
> [Do you ever spend time with your customers socially?] Not really. I mean, I have, a few months ago I went to the 70th birthday party of one of the customers but generally no. I mean, you may see them at a meeting or, for instance tomorrow I’ve gotta go on a sprayer training course. So you may see them there. But it’s hardly social, it’s just, sometimes you see them at county shows and things like that but not, I don’t arrange to go to the pub and have a drink with them or anything like that, no (Contractor 4)

On-farm interactions differ significantly, however, as the farmer-contractor interface is usually friendly but fleeting, acknowledgements of one another reduced to a ‘look’, a ‘hello’ or the giving or receiving of instructions at the beginning of a job.

> [But is it like, would you see them?] Yeah, they usually look out and see you, yeah (Contractor 6)
>
> Oh, hedge trimming, I can go to a farm, be there three or four days, you might see ‘em first day and that’s it, you won’t see ‘em the rest of the week [Really? Do you prefer that?] Hedge trimming, you know what you’re doing, you just carry on and, you know, yeah, there ain’t nothing they can do. They can say hello and you alright. Yeah (Contractor 3)

Farmer 16 describes these differences in the sense of obligation between the three cohorts whilst Farmer 3 refers more specifically to the interactional differences.

> I don't have the responsibility then, with contractors. I don't feel that I must find them work. I don't feel that I'm responsible for them paying their household bills, which, with full-time workers, you know, you are. And I still accept responsibility with a full-time worker they should eat before you do really because you've got a responsibility towards them. You know, your farm is getting better on the back of their work really. So you know, you shouldn't take it lightly (Farmer 16)

> With contractors it's, they've got to do a job, so they're coming, I'd like you to bale, 200 hundred bales, Thursday. Ok, I'll see if I can do it. Two o clock I'll start. You carry on. What fields? They just do it, and then they bugger off. Because that's just what they do. Whereas somebody labouring, you're telling them, or you're trying to discuss, or we're talking about tomorrow, do this, do that. Or if you're going somewhere, I'll leave this and this so if you could do that and that and see how you get on. (Farmer 3)

Farmers acknowledge the responsiveness of contractors in pecuniary terms;

> When the bill comes in, I pay it […] because I expect them to come in when I want, and they expect to be paid, and I've got a contractor…well, one of the contractors now, you know, he's still owed money from 12 months ago so…if you delve deeper into a lot of reasons why contractors don't go very quickly, its pounds, shillings and pence (Farmer 17)

The dynamic of interdependence is not limited to factors of economics, timing or weather. Relationships between farmers and contractors also enable the sharing of knowledge and tools to prevent isolation in the job.

> [Would you say your relationship is pretty good with them?] Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Some of them wanna run ideas through me as much as I wanna do the same to them […] They ring up and try to find out what the trend is and what's happening with the other customer base. And well we were thinking about that and what's your angle on it, type of thing. And I've done the same, loads of times. I've got guys whose sons are now farming who I grew up with, and they're farming, their sons are just starting to come into the farm and very often, you know, you get very down in the mouth and you wanna cheer yourself up and wanna speak to somebody, oh, what's happening in your world type of thing. You know, I get really stressed and worried about decisions I've made and whether I've made the right decision, then I get onto them, do you think this is a good idea. Well, have you thought about this, have you thought about that. Well, no I didn't actually, or well, yes I did. You know, we chew things over. They're somewhat, I've known 'em, went to school with 'em, grown up with 'em and all that. Then there's some of them I wouldn't wanna tell them what I'm

thinking or what I'm doing or, so it's a bit of everything really, yeah (Contractor 8)

Contractor 8 makes it clear that an attached interdependent relationship offers clear benefits to both parties but that the distinction between the two types of customers is significant.

The presence and prevalence of contractors allows the farmer to transfer enormous decision-making responsibilities off of the holding altogether, especially when it comes to the choice of machinery. For if the machine of one contractor turns out to be too big, too small, or in some other way unsuitable for a particular holding, most farmers are confident that another contractor will own something more effective pertaining to their needs. Some contractors regularly seek advice from farmers regarding their future machinery requirements, but due to lack of any investment apart from the emotional investment of those partaking in attached interdependence relationships, farmers are not obliged to employ machinery they themselves might have chosen. So in this case, they are not so much employing the worker, but the machine.

Several contractors related how procurement decisions are adjusted to the needs of the customer, even if the customer doesn't follow-through contractually following a decision-making process.

> Oh yeah. The trouble is, it's like the self-propelled forager. I was gonna buy a self-propelled. And then at the last minute I changed me mind, cos there was a lot of self-propelleds going around. Well now, over the last year, the forage wagons have come in. Well they must have knocked the self-propelled boys [Contractor 2's Wife] Yeah, but the self-propelled, you did ask you customers if they wanted self-propelled. And the majority said they didn't] No. That's right [Contractor 2'S Wife) But you lost one or two cos they went away to a self-propelled]
>
> [So do you upgrade quite regularly to the new stuff?] You tend to go with what people want a little bit (Contractor 2's Wife)

6.2.2.6 Interpretations of Value and Respect

Despite the careful balance described above, delicately honed by both farmers and contractors in their relationship-building process, respect or lack of it was one of the issues contractors complained of, with regards to the relationships they perceived between themselves and the farmer. A huge disparity emerged in the data between the perceptions of each cohort. Contractors often felt undervalued by the customer. Contractor 8 went so far as to described farmers as using 'businesses like ours like a

bank, or a toilet or whichever which way you wanna put it'. Whilst Contractor 5 identified the worse thing about contracting as:

> Being taken as a mug. Just recently we've got a few people who owe us money, and like I said, you do as much as you can whoever they are, and contractors are at the bottom of the pay list. You know, they pay the big merchants for the seed or the chemical or whatever, and then they pay everyone else, and you know, you put the invoices in. Oh, you'll have to wait. I get the milk cheque the 18th January. You know, they'll write the cheque and date it the 19th. And you think, well I haven't got a milk cheque coming in. I don't have a milk cheque coming in in December (Contractor 5)

Usually responses regarding value mirrored other responses regarding variations in relationships, a sense of feeling valued by some but not others.

> [So, do you feel like contractors are valued by the farming community? You can be honest.] Yeah, I suppose, cos there are jobs that we do that they wouldn't even want to do. [Do you feel valued?] Some do yeah, some really appreciates us. Some not too sure (Contractor 3)

> Some, you know, they say thanks very much, very good job, you know, that sort of thing. You know, they'll soon tell you if there's something wrong (Contractor 2)

Respect might literally be regarded as needing to be earned. A number of more established contractors described how their customers used to try and bargain with their prices but no longer do.

> [Do your customers ever try to bargain with you over the prices?] Not now, no. They used to years ago, but not now (Contractor 6)

> [Overall how would you say your customers treat you?] Hopefully getting better. It was very hard work when I was about twenty getting somewhere. Now I think most of them know what you're about and know you're gonna put your biggest effort into it (Contractor 5)

> [Ok. Do customers ever try to bargain with you over prices?] Ummm. They do. Not as much now as in the past, I don't think but yeah it can be a, it can be a two-way conversation (Contractor 4)

> [Do they ever try and bargain with you price-wise?] They will but if I say a price, that's it […] If you start quibbling about the price, you start quibbling, it start dropping, and you'm in trouble. Cos one tells t'other, t'other tells t'other (Contractor 2)

However, contractors appear to think that farmers have a lower opinion/regard/level of dependence on them than is actually the case. A hypothetical situation was presented to some of the farmers asking what the repercussions on their farm would be if they were unable to get hold of any contractors for the next year; a stark scenario, the thought of which caused obvious discomfort for many of the participants.

> Well, it would be impossible to farm. It's as simple as that […] you're employing their skill as well as their machinery and yes, you can buy machinery but a lot of the skills they use on the equipment, if there was no such thing as a contractor tomorrow to be honest, the whole agricultural industry would fall to pieces. The problem is that machinery's too expensive, staff is too expensive, you would have to amalgamate farmers to buy machinery. This is where we started off with contractors, because a lot of us had our own foragers, they were wearing out, we couldn't afford to replace them. So the Duchy, this is the Duchy of Cornwall, the Duchy did a feasibility, we all got together, you know, and said what are we gonna do. The Duchy financed a feasibility study of us jointly purchasing machinery and in reality, it was going to cost us just as much to finance the machinery as it was going to be to employ the contractor. So it seemed silly to buy the machinery and have the risk, when you could get a contractor for the same as you were gonna be paying on interest, and you still have to put labour to it. So that's really why we went down the contractor route (Farmer 10)
>
> I could get over some of it, but I couldn't get over all of it [Ok. So would it affect you financially?] To a certain extent. As long as the single farm payment is there, it wouldn't affect me financially. Because I could just say, right, I'll fallow the lot, which is, you know something, is something about the European Common Market, you know, you can get over these things [Right. Ok. But in terms of the work itself, would you struggle?] I would struggle (Farmer 17)
>
> Oh, we couldn't run without them. Yeah (Farmer 20)
>
> If I couldn't get hold of any contractors for a year, um, well it depends when they told me, basically. I mean basically, we've got a little bit of resilience […] I've got some resilience in that I have got some machinery. So I've got some capacity in ploughing, drilling, working ground, rolling, cutting grass, turning grass, strolling in grass. If I couldn't get any contractors for a year, I'd have to, at the moment I couldn't conserve my silage, and I couldn't combine my corn. So, if they said to me last week, we're going off combining I'd have to think about not putting any crops in the ground. It would've been that simple. I wouldn't have put any crops in the ground. But obviously now I've put the crops in the ground last week,

> literally, this is a bad week to tell me this, so now I, I've put the crops in the ground myself, and they need spraying, and I need a contractor to spray. So I have to buy a sprayer. And then I'd have to buy a combine, to combine them. That would be my problem right now if I couldn't get any contractors for a year on the corn front. Having said that, if I knew I hadn't got anybody to spray them or I hadn't got anybody to combine them, I wouldn't have put them in the ground. I would've put grass in the ground and said, sod it, cos actually there's no money in it. So that would have been that part of it. I use contractors for drilling my maize and for harvesting my maize, so I wouldn't be able to grow my maize. I use contractors for conserving my grass, although I could make hay, which is what I used to do sort of 20 or 30 years ago. But I've only got a small baler, it's been superseded if you know what I mean. I've got the hay equipment but now we're on to the big silage stuff. So id' have to go and buy a round baler and a wrapper. On my fodder beet, I grow fodder beet which is a really good crop cos I strip graze that, and that's my direction of travel cos it's really high yielding and the cows can strip graze it in the field. I need a contractor to spray the fodder beet and I need, I use a contractor to drill the fodder beet, whether I need that or not I'm not sure. So yeah, it would be awkward if I couldn't get a contractor for a year. I'd totally change my farming system. I would probably have to buy some form of, if contractors weren't about, I'd go out of corn, I'd go out of maize, we'd think about the fodder beet. I might get a fodder beet drill, and I'd get some way of conserving the grass. That would probably either by buying a round baler and a wrapper or a forage wagon, or I could, I mean it depends if you're hypothetically saying that I couldn't employ me neighbours, I could go over to my neighbour and get a forage wagon and do something cooperatively, if you know what I mean. So that would be, if there was no contractors about, it depends if you would call a neighbouring farmer a contractor, I could probably work with my neighbours to sort out the problem […] I'd say they were crucial to my business, yeah I would say they're crucial to efficiently running the business. I could definitely do without them but they're crucial to the efficient running of the business. I would probably have to keep more labour here on the farm as a residual amount if you know what I mean. you know, the contractor just gives me a five grand bill and I'm going like, shit how do I pay this, and you know, but they've done the job in a day and it's really efficient and I've got a high quality product and, you know, so the contractors are crucial (Farmer 7)

The respect of farmers towards the contracting community extends beyond purely their role in their business but also the performance and accomplishment of work.

> What they have to cover, it's just mind-boggling how much ground and work they have to cover in, you know, and of course, with crops, it all comes at different stages. And they have to be sprayed at a certain stage, and that is the thing. If you've got a thousand acres at that stage, you've only got like three or four days to spray that. Else it's gone on to the next stage. I wouldn't wanna be one. I wouldn't wanna be a contractor (Farmer 3)

Prioritisation of payment to larger businesses provokes perceptions of being undervalued but this is partially the fault of the financial position of the farmer, stoked by causes beyond their control (such as timing of payments from their own customers or the government). Certain contractors are also culpable, however, due to poorly timed invoicing systems or having developed a reputation for being financially flexible.

Although many farmers recognise timing of payment as being vital to the maintenance of a good relationship, interdependence was also perceived by some farmers as the enactment of 'looking after each other', a behaviour extending beyond economic factors to acts of generosity such as offering them breakfast or lunch.

> We try to look after them fairly well. Hence the empty dishes on the table there […] the contractor on the drilling has just had breakfast. So they tend to appreciate that sort of thing [So would you consider them friends, some of them?] Yes (Farmer 17)

> We do, and we try and make it as easy as we can for them, to obviously try and lower the price and make it, you know, it all reflects, it all knocks on doesn't it. So if you look after them, they'll look after you. You know, a good pasty lunch helps sometimes as well (Farmer 6)

According to Newby (1977), 'the good employer is one who extends his relationship with his workers beyond the wage bargain' as a demonstration of their care for the worker (ibid: 307). At the same time, he compares these employer offerings to 'the accoutrements of nineteenth-century paternalism' (ibid: 307). Normally resulting from the relationship between the farmer and a more permanent hired worker, acts of generosity which will also be considered in section 6.2.5, the extension of this behaviour to members of the flexible labour force is telling of their value to the farmer.

Relationship constraints between farmer and contractor

Any existing desire to create a bond or attachment with the customer is often thwarted by the requirement to perform a task quickly. Pressures incurred from capital costs act as a barrier to social connection. This presents a constraint to the freedom of the individual as discussed in Chapter Four, which might ultimately affect the wellbeing of

the contractor. A significant agent in this case is the machinery and the machinery suppliers whose control directly affects on-farm relationships and the individual.

> Sometimes it's nice to see them, make sure everything's going right. But usually if it's a busy farm, they don't wanna stay talking anyway. That's the biggest problem. Some farmers will stay talking for a long long time and you, you sorta gotta stay there and talk to them, but you wanna get on as well cos you've got the next one waiting. It's a bit awkward sometimes (Contractor 6)

> Only time that I see them is if you combining […] Then you'd see them all day long. But now you don't see 'em to speak to cos you'm on the combine and gotta keep going and they gotta keep going. You know (Contractor 2)

> [Do you ever work together or is it much more of you on your own?] In the past it has been. I mean nowadays you're on your own because you're sitting on equipment that's bigger and faster so it tends to be more, I mean, you can go some places and do the job and not see anybody but, whereas in the past, you would perhaps always see…. but it's mainly because on those farms there's not any labour. So, the farmer himself is probably looking at stock or whatever and, you know, he doesn't employ you to go there to have a chit chat, he employs you to go in and do the job and get the job done (Contractor 4)

Apart from the social element of spatial interaction on a holding, contractors often showed a preference for less surveillance methods whilst performing a work task.

> And I say, I've done the job, alright. Oh, yeah, proper job and that. And then you go to another place, he's watching you the whole bloody time […] But, I'm the sort, I like to go in and do a job. I don't like people watching me all the time (Contractor 2)

For larger contracting firms, the surveillance of the worker transfers from the firm boss to the customer whose land is being worked. But as previously mentioned, overt surveillance was infrequently employed by hiring farmers. This is largely due to trust built up between the two parties but will also be driven to some extent by time constraints preventing the farmer from being able to monitor the work of the contractor to any degree. Additionally, due to the nature of farming, a task performed poorly, such as spraying, might not be immediately obvious to the farmer but could very well become apparent sometime after a task is performed and as crops grow. So methods of monitoring agricultural contractors might be more of a passive act, enacted by visually surveying the land post-task, either immediately or later in the season, rather than an active form of on-task monitoring.

According to Ball (2010), general surveillance practice in the workplace 'has an impact on privacy; ethics and human rights; power and empowerment; and social exclusion' (ibid: 98). The lack of such practices in the workplace of the contractor therefore might enhance their sense of social well-being and empowerment in comparison to other types of worker, where the use of surveillance techniques confer 'massive benefits on the employer but relatively little benefit on the employee, perpetuating wider power asymmetries' (ibid: 99).

Signs exist that increasingly inflated capital costs could possibly change attachment relationships in the future, potentially destabilising the current lifescape format as it stands. The perpetual upgrading of machinery is already causing some contractors who have demonstrated leniency towards customers' late payment based upon attached interdependence relationships to disrupt or consider disrupting that relationship.

> It's my new year's resolution just to have a zero tolerance of that. Cos, you know, it just costs so much money to run this kit now, you just can't, you can't do it now (Contractor 5)

The phenomenon of the propensity to buy bigger machinery resulting in a need for more customers to pay for that machinery not only affects the well-being of the contractor in terms of relationship-building but also their more general well-being. It incites a need to work harder, longer hours, and accrue more jobs, what Addicott (2016) describes as 'an expansionary logic and effect' (ibid: 183). Numerous contractors and farmers revealed stories of contracting businesses going bust or 'chasing their tails' as a result of this effect. Therefore, competition and over-purchasing of machinery threaten the stability of the market, and thus the lifescapes of the contractors and the farmers in their areas.

> Bigger ones who tend to buy big equipment and they have to find the farmers to, you know, to keep it all going. But I think that's a modern phenomenon cos we've come from, you've been established for many years and you tend to know your customers and you get attached to your customers and that's how you sort of keep their work. And I'm not saying that gives you licence to charge what you like, you have to still be competitive but, um, I mean the farmer's son thing did, a few years ago, especially something like hedge trimming where the time-scale's not so crucial, yeah they did used to buy their own equipment then they'd go out and do a bit of work because obviously they view the fact the equipment was free and then they could just go out and earn a bit of pocket money but, that's not such a big problem now because I think they're all beginning to realise what it costs to run machinery so unless they charge a

> realistic rate, they don't tend to do it really. Otherwise they're just wearing their equipment out for, you know, no gain really (Contractor 4)

Newby (1977) identified that for the farm worker, 'to drive a newer and bigger combine harvester or four-wheel drive tractor than anyone else on the farm or in the district is a matter of pride and status enhancement' (ibid: 292), and although many interviewed farm workers showed minimal interest in machinery, contractor status does appear to still be linked to these patterns of conspicuous consumption. Financial investment rather than lease hiring of machinery by contractors is an example of investment in not only the object but as a significant symbol to those viewing externally.

Relationships of interdependence between farmers and contractors are difficult to measure due to the fluid nature of the relationships. When one contractor dies, goes bust or moves out of the industry, new relationships need to be formed. However, a confident assertion that most farmer-contractor relationships studied are based on one of the two branches of attached interdependence can be made, with more weight on the loyalty/obligation branch than the social branch. Consequently, a negative of a move towards more contracting in the farming world is that relationships might result in less social capital (with some contractors reporting zero interaction) but the positives are that more cultural capital such as skills and knowledge is stimulated. While this mutual balance is maintained, contractors prove to be significant actors in the sustainability of the farm and thus the farming industry. Equally, the work of the contractor comes to represent the identity of the farmer to the outside world. Although it is the farmer who dictates type and timing of task, it is often the contractor who executes said task. They contribute to the 'front stage' activity of a farm (Goffman 1959) where successful execution reflects well on the farmer and the contractor. This merging of symbolic capital, a reputational store built up from visible work done which is connected to either an individual or a generation of individuals (Burton 2004), fits into the symbiosis that makes up the farmer-contractor relationship. The quality of the work of the contractor has a direct effect on the farmer-farmer and farmer-community status, whilst reinforcing their own status within the contracting world.

> [One of the things that gave farm workers status in the community was the ability to drive a straight line, is that still something now?] It is. If you go round and you see farms, you can always tell, well I can, you go down the road, good farmer in there. Everything's perfect. Straight, tidy [But is it a good farmer or a good contractor?] Yeah, you don't know. Well, I do because I know who do's his work! [Do you? So if you don't work for a certain farmer, do you know who does?] Yeah, yeah […] I knows who do's all the contracting (Contractor 6)

The interconnected nature of the farmer, the farm worker and the contractor therefore extends beyond the farm to the community and the objective of being perceived as a 'good farmer' (Burton 2004). Often the assumption is that it is the farmer who is sitting in the tractor in their field but much of the 'visible' work performed on a farm, that which is regarded by the outsider, is actually performed by a contractor. There is a danger of ignoring the wider role played by the contractor here. Their position in terms of the implementation of techniques favourable to sustainability and intensification is as much, if not more, 'frontline' than the other farm labour contributors in the South West yet is significantly less recognised as being such. And due to the shared goal of ensuring future harvests by whatever means, shared beliefs, rather than being replaced by, rather exist alongside, relationships of economic reciprocity and mutual dependency in the development of social harmony between farmers and contractors.

6.2.3 The Worker-Contractor Interface

Contractors had little to say about the contemporary farm worker in relation to holdings they worked on, apart from noting their decline and the resultant lack of social interactions available. Farm workers too spoke of contractors in a much more detached way than farmers did. They clearly perceive themselves as separate from the contractor and noted how they very rarely worked alongside one another. Spatial and temporal constraints dictate the depth of relationship established between farm worker and contractor.

> They tend to be fairly separate yeah. I mean there are some sort of core contractors that are almost, by the mechanics, based out of the yard, sort of thing, stuff like that. But most of 'em, they're here frequently but not for massive lengths of time (Farm Worker 1)

Whilst two farm workers seemed unclear as to what a contractor was (both of these workers were not British), most farm workers perceived the role of the contractor in the farming industry positively.

> I think they're helpful, definitely. I think they can be used to ease pressure for, you know, among us it's just one thing to not have to worry about, because it often feels like there's plenty to be worrying about. You know, you know they're going to come in and do the silage and get in it in the clamp and have it ready for us, and that's almost a weight off your shoulders in a way (Farm Worker 3)

> I think they've got a role, especially in farming nowadays, the kit and everything, is probably too expensive for your average farmer to buy and have their own, many years ago you had all your own kit and just plodded along. But nowadays you need them to come in with the bigger gear and do things quickly.

> Everything's gotta be done a lot quicker nowadays so yeah. They got a big role to play. And generally, they're not bad guys, most of them (Farm Worker 2)

Farm Worker 1 initially referred to the contractor as 'they just do what they're told' but later admitted their agency in the performance of work tasks.

> If there's a contractor doing slurry and what have you, it's up to them really to say, look enough's enough, if I put any more on and this runs off then I'm gonna be in trouble, and then you'll be in trouble as well (Farm Worker 1)

The expression of interest in becoming a full-time contractor was rare amongst the farm workers interviewed; a feeling reciprocated by the contractor towards being a farm worker. Three of the farm workers declared that they sometimes work as contractors, either for neighbours or friends. Of those remaining, only one admitted a clear desire to become a contractor.

> That's what I'd love to do, to be honest with you (Farm Worker 10)

Although Farm Worker 11 stated 'Well, I probably have wondered it occasionally but I've not really looked into it' and Farm Worker 5 suggested he could revert to foot-trimming if labour market conditions for the hired farm worker forced change. Farm Worker 6 supposes that he has considered becoming a contractor but subsequently compared it unfavourably to his current job.

> I suppose I have. But then, I keep thinking you'd just be sat in a tractor all day, doing the same thing all the time so you haven't quite got the variation (Farm Worker 6)

Overall, farm worker perceptions of contractors were generally positive, despite Farm Worker 9 proclaiming 'they earn too much money'. Limited interaction appears to occur on a social level at the worker-contractor interface but farm workers demonstrated a guarded respect towards the challenging undertakings of the contractor.

When probed on perceptions of their own pay and work-life balance, overall farm workers and contractors stated that contractors probably earn more. But these statements were usually attached to comments concerning employment risk and stability, both significant concerns for the contractor, and effective deterrents for the farm worker. Queries concerning work-life balance revealed a contrasting pattern of perception, where overall, farm workers and contractors consider farm workers to be better off than contractors.

> I don't know really. I'd say farmers got their set hours but it all depends what they're doing, don't it (Contractor 3)

> Oh, we've got a better work-life balance. Way better! (Farm Worker 12)

> They are stuck on their own, they're not working with other people. If a farmer wants them to do a job, they've gotta kind of do it. And sometimes they wouldn't have the time off that they could get when it's not so busy here (Farm Worker 6)

> Oh, I've got it easier than them, yeah. They have to go if the phone rings (Farm Worker 5)

> For us, we know that we get two days off a week, usually, unless there's a major drama, whereas a tractor driver at silage time, who knows when they'll get a day off. Who knows when they'll get an hour off? You know. And that's tough. But then maybe in the winter they have a lot more time on their hands to catch up on the fact that they've missed out all summer. I feel like mine is probably preferable to them (Farm Worker 3)

Contractors tended to perceive themselves to be in a similar or slightly better financial position than farm workers but recognise their precariousness with regards to benefits, more specifically pensions and security into the future, as well as the consistency and security of their working position. This sentiment was echoed by some farm workers.

> [How do you think you fair financially compared to contractors?] Probably not as well. But then, there's less risk, because it's a salary that comes in every month (Farm Worker 1)

> Yeah, some of them don't get anything [benefits] at all. I don't know why they're doing the job really if they don't get anything for it. Yeah, holiday, sick pay. It's quite nice to know if I was to get flattened by something and had to be off for a little while, I would have some pay (Farm Worker 5)

> [Do you think there are any benefits to being a contractor?] Presumably their salary would reflect the hours that they work, but apart from that, I couldn't see much (Farm Worker 2)

6.2.4 The Worker-Worker Interface

The status of contractors interviewed is mixed but regardless of whether working as a 'one-man band' or for 'the big boys', contractors typically spend most of their working day alone.

Worker-worker relationships were variable, extending from relationships of irritation and annoyance to very solid and dependable friendships. Six out of the seventeen farm workers interviewed did not have any other co-workers apart from the farmer, whilst eight farm workers had at least one other person besides the farmer working on the same holding. Only workers on one holding reported consistent worker-worker issues, mostly directed at one individual.

> He just does something with someone every day to really put you off him. […] he's just awkward with everyone. You do what you can but… [Did you ever complain about him?] Yeah, I have. I'm the only person who's ever sat down to him face to face and said, like, this happens this happens this happens, can we try this. I'm the only person who's ever tried that apparently. Lasted for about three days and then he's just gone back to normal. And er… [Why do you think they don't get rid of him if he's the cause or one of the main causes?] Because the farm manager doesn't know dairy farming and also, they've had a project going on where they've been building a new parlour. And in the herd manager's previous career he was like a project manager for dairy consultancies who used to plan new builds. And I think he's been able to project manage that. And they've needed him, or they think they've needed him for that (Farm Worker 11)

A high turnover rate on this holding proved not only difficult for management reasons but also for the staff.

> It's challenging cos you build up levels of rapport and understanding of how they work and sort of, what pushes their buttons, and that sort of thing, so it's that process of 'learning new people' can be, it's almost the downside really, in terms of, when there is turnover, is just having to go back through that education process again (Farm Worker 1)

Apart from this farm, where the incidence of leaving was high and general dissatisfaction was recorded pertaining to one member of staff, levels of camaraderie and bonhomie appeared high between workers on other farms. Friendships veered from being 'friendly enough' (Farm Worker 1) to Farm Worker 4's declaration that;

> I think if we weren't here together, I don't think we would be here at all really (Farm Worker 4)

This presented itself as the strongest 'friendship' recorded out of all case studies and was, interestingly, occurring between two women. Their relationship blurred the public/private boundary, representing a more intimate support system which Farm Worker 4 described as them 'supporting each other a lot just to get through it'. Andrew and Montague (1998) might infer that this friendship should be perceived as an act of resistance. They suggest that, for women, 'friendships create and maintain views about the world [and] this sociocultural world becomes a haven from the daily negotiation of a patriarchal sociocultural world' (ibid: 360), articulated by Farm Worker 4.

> I also like the fact that I am one of the only women on the farm and just sort of like, it makes you try harder and show up the boys a little bit more and, yeah, I really like that. And they don't seem intimidated. Cos the dairy farm I worked at

> back home, they just didn't like the fact that there was a woman working on the farm. And I found that really difficult because like, like the manager was really great. He was a family friend and so I didn't have a problem with him, but it was with the other farm workers. They were just really intimidated with a girl who was educated at the time, and you know, they'd just dropped out of school when they were 15 and went to milk cows. And um, they just like never spoke to me, or anything like that (Farm Worker 4)

> We've had someone work for us and he didn't like, he doesn't like us girls telling him what to do. And he didn't like that, and he's a lot older and I guess, you know, he's sixty-ish, and he didn't like that at all (Farm Worker 12)

Gender-related interactions otherwise appeared insignificant, or were weighted towards women feeling the need to prove themselves.

> You name ten men and I reckon I work harder than you know, like 8 or 9 of them, and especially because it's a male dominated industry and to be a woman, I feel very chuffed to be doing as well as I do (Farm Worker 4)

Considering the fact that the quantitative results of the South West Farm Survey revealed that 25 per cent of all farms surveyed reported employing one or more women on their farm, with dairy, cattle and mixed farms employing most women overall, further examination of gender-related interactions, both on and off-farm, would be a justifiable study.

Responses of most farm workers concluded that strong friendships could exist on-farm, even if these were not nurtured off-farm through interaction or frequent social events. The shift from an occupational community to farm-centred or encapsulated communities to the now dispersed community, and the decline in public houses in the rural areas of Britain, both to be discussed in the following chapter, are also likely precursors to possible changes in relationships between farm workers.

Overall, worker-worker relationships were dependent on the personal qualities of each worker and the ability of all members of a workforce to pull their weight equally or to carry the weight of another worker if not performing optimally.

6.2.5 The Farmer – Farm Worker Interface

Of those who answered the question, would you describe the work dynamic on the farm more as a team or a family, just over half (55%) of the respondents declared they would call the work network a team. 25% would call it a family, with one worker commenting that they perceive them as both a team and a family, and at the other end of the spectrum, a worker described them as a 'collection of individuals' (Farm Worker 11). At first glance, these responses suggest a move away from the paternalistic

dynamic described in earlier analyses of the farmer-farm worker relationship. Newby (1977) deduced that 'the "team" analogy did not in many cases go far enough in discriminating the nature of the farm worker's attachment to his employer' (ibid: 310), identifying that on the smaller farms, the family analogy of work dynamics was 'a realistic assessment of the patriarchal nature of the farmer's authority' (ibid: 310). Two of the farm workers answered 'family' were over the age of 70, possibly suggesting that old patterns of paternalism were still in play for them psychologically. However, length of time with one employer also played a part here. The other, interestingly, was a young apprentice.

Of all farmers who were asked this question, 88% said the dynamic was more that of a team, with only one agreeing that it was more like a family. A number of farmers and farm workers were either not asked or did not answer this question due to the fact that they work almost entirely alone. These results differ significantly from Newby's analysis where the family metaphor proved common in farm worker perceptions of themselves and their work situation. Comparisons should be of a loose nature as much of this could be due to vast differences in farm regions or farm type, as well as generational and class changes. Farm systems vary also, where in the South West, milk, cattle reared or meat, poultry and wheat[11] are the main output of the region[12] (Defra 2017c), whilst in the East of England at the time Newby's study was undertaken, the majority of output was arable (wheat and barley), with a smaller proportion of dairy and vegetable growing (Newby 1977).

Farm workers demonstrated a much deeper emotional attachment to the farmer than the contractors. Farm Worker 16 had officially retired from a farm he'd worked on for over forty years but still works there occasionally, more out of obligation/desire than a need to work.

> [Do you still go down sometimes now?] Oh yeah, lay a hedge now and again. Whatever [Farmer X] wants, he'll give me a shout and I go down. I'd always go back down there if they want any help (Farm Worker 16)

A sense of owing the farmer mimics the paternalism discussed by Newby.

> If it weren't for [Farmer X] I wouldn't be living in a place like this. He helped me get this place [Really?] Yeah. He was good to me. Very good to me […] You couldn't wish for a better boss (Farm Worker 16)

Several of the older farm workers had outlived their original employer who had been succeeded by their sons and continued to work for the son who they would watch grow

[11] Sheep replace wheat for the region of Devon (Butler and Lobley 2007).
[12] Region comprises Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Bristol / Bath area, including Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks Defra (2017).

up. The emotional attachment seemed to transfer from the original employer to their successor and extend beyond them to the whole family, paralleling some of the farmer-contractor relationships.

> [So they were quite good to you?] Oh, they were brilliant. [Farmer X's son]'s the same as his father. Brilliant people […] Couldn't wish for two better people or family (Farm Worker 16)

> [How would you describe your relationship with the managers?] Good, yeah, good yeah yeah [You get on?] Yeah, yeah, yeah [And you work alongside them?] I used to babysit all the kids [You used to babysit [Farmer X]?] Yeah, [Farmer X], [his sister], the two daughters. [Wow, that's so fun!] Back then, yeah! (Farm Worker 7)

> The full-time guy I've known for fifty years, because he used to work for my father before me (Farmer 14)

The attachment of Farm Worker 16 to the land he worked/works is discussed further in chapter eight but the depth of his attachment to his previous boss is demonstrated by his desire to, after his death, have his ashes scattered in exactly the same place as his;

> [Saying that you want your ashes scattered on the on the farm, that's a huge thing] [Farmer X]'s are up on the hill. I spent a lot of my life with him […] And [Farmer X's Son]'s will be up there as well (Farm Worker 16)

But in spite of their tendency towards the more deferential response of a farm worker, both of the older men recognised their own agency in keeping their respective places of employment going.

> He nearly give up. I think I pulled him out of the…. [Farm Worker 16's wife: He always said that, didn't he] Yeah. They were about to give up. They were on their last legs (Farm Worker 16)

All of the farm workers stated that they felt like they were treated with respect and courtesy by their employers apart from Farm Worker 15, whose situation was reminiscent of a farm worker working for a 'bad farmer' in the 1970s. Inertia forced him to withstand; a dilapidated tied cottage off-farm into which he'd paid £15,000 of his own money to make it liveable; few holidays or days off; and a very unhealthy work-life balance that had caused irreparable damage to personal relationships.

> I don't stay because I do it for love for my boss, or because he's grateful for my services, because he really isn't. Because he doesn't really pay me bugger all. I do it because when I'm left alone and they don't hassle me so much, and I'm just here with the locals and everything else, it's quite nice (Farm Worker 15)

A similar sense exists of the farmer looking after the farm worker as previously described in their nurturing of relationships with contractors. Often with non-monetary rewards such as breakfast, pasties, or simply a more established friendship, Newby recorded how 'looking after' the workers implies a genuine concern for the personal welfare, including help with personal and domestic problems […] and frequent individual acts of generosity' (ibid: 307).

> [Farm Worker D] comes in 'ere. He spends more time in 'ere having breakfast than bloody I would do. Do you know what I mean? We are quite, we are very trusting, the way we have been brought up really (Farmer 3)

> If I wanted something, or if he wanted something, I'd drop my hat for any of my mates. And he's not just a worker he's my mate as well (Farmer 3)

> I'm probably a bit more the mummy to them. So, if they look a bit tired…they might come to me rather than go to one of the males on the farm if there was…one of our part-time almost full-time, the one with the cattle, lost his mother, and so I spent quite some time talking with him to get him through that (Farmer 13)

Probes into whether the workers felt valued revealed three tiers of emotion in response to this. There were those who showed an emphatically positive response, those who responded positively but with less surety, 'yeah, the majority of the time' and those who clearly stated that they did not feel valued in their role. Interviews revealed that the majority felt valued all of the time, just under a quarter felt valued most of the time, and the remaining three workers said that they either didn't particularly feel valued or did not feel valued anymore. The latter group were all under the age of 34 but worked for differing sizes and types of farms, one of which, surprisingly, was organic. Research into the comparative health benefits for workers on organic horticultural units in the UK show organic farm workers scoring higher on the Short Depression Happiness Scale (SDHS) suggesting they are altogether happier than their conventional farm peers (Cross et al 2008).

Reasons for feeling undervalued amongst participants varied.

> As with all farming, its split in very different ways. You get your average Joe Blogs family farmer, that's scraping a living which is really struggling and really are, you know, they're nice people. They'll never upset anyone, they just go about their business, try to earn a pound. And unfortunately, they're the ones that are struggling. Then unfortunately, you get the people like I work for, and the big farm and land owners, who only farm for….they're not farming because they enjoy farming. They're farming for financial reasons or, for, other than, yes,

> they're trying to do it to make a living, but they're not doing, they're not working. It's very difficult circumstances but, you know, it's just how it is. They wouldn't be, for instance, in the lambing shed in the winter times. They wouldn't do things like that (Farmer Worker 15)
>
> And I'm not talking about friends of mine, where they're family farmers, I'm talking about the big local landowners. And a lot of their workers are pushed so hard. Of all the farming people that I know, other than farmers that actually own the farms, I only know one other farm worker that would do what I do […] He'll be 62. But he's on site. He's in a tied cottage. So that's tied as well. Other than that, everyone else is sensible (Farm Worker 15)

Many of the younger farm workers used short answers in describing their relationships with the farmers or managers, answering 'pretty good', 'good', or 'very good' seemingly without being able to elaborate beyond this. This connects to the amount of time workers revealed that they worked alone, suggesting that perhaps looser relationships are being formed between farm worker and farmer due to either a (re)division of labour occurring on farms or time constraints as labour is spread more thinly between fewer workers.

The drivers behind levels of satisfaction felt by farm workers are much less to do with their interactions with the farmer and indeed their fellow workers but their own intrinsic reasons for wanting to work in farming. Much of this ties in with the desire to work outdoors, in nature, or the variety of the work itself, in establishing that farm workers have more agency now because there are so few skilled workers available, the farmer becomes more of a vehicle to achieve their aims rather than somebody whom they desire to please external to their own objectives.

> [Ok. How would you describe your relationship with the managers?] Pretty good I'd hope. [So you get on? Why do you think you get on?] Um, I'm not sure. I really couldn't put my finger on it (Farm Worker 1)
>
> [Do you ever work alongside them?] Not hugely [But is it important then, for you to see them?] No, no. I've got enough rope to hang myself with most of the time (Farm Worker 1)

Social connections between farm workers and farmers are limited amongst the study participants. But where Newby might have attributed this to class, reasons given by respondents were more varied. One farm worker attributed it to whether the farmer or manager had children.

> [Do you ever do anything socially with the bosses?] No, not really with the bosses, I suppose. We were going out for a meal once a week, sort of the dairy

> team. We usually have a meal at the end of calving. Stuff like that […] [And do they come along to that?] Yeah, sometimes, yeah. And I suppose it's like, there's a bit of, I wouldn't say divide, everyone on the farm team who's single or without kids, a little bit younger, that doesn't mean anything too much in terms of the age, but, whereas [Farmer/Manager] having young kids makes it a bit harder for him for evenings and stuff like that so…(Farm Worker 1)

Others actively avoid spending time with the farmer.

> [So you don't spend time socially with your manager?] Oh, I try and avoid it. We have work meals and stuff every now and then, and it's like, errghhh, yeah (Farm Worker 11)

> [And how would you describe your relationship with the farmer?] It's not very intense, it's more like…usually our, we don't talk too much [No? So, do you ever work alongside him?] A few times. Not very often [Would you prefer to work with him more or are you happy with that, the way it is?] I think I'm happy, yeah (Farm Worker 13)

> [Do you ever spend any time with him socially?] A little bit [Yeah?] Yeah [In what way?] Maybe a drink after work on the farm [Ok. And do you ever ask him any advice about your life that's not related to farm work?] No [No. So there's enough of a divide that you wouldn't do that?] *nods* (Farm Worker 13)

> The trouble is, I'll be honest, I am bent over the barrel so screwed, its… I have… it's so complicated. Yes, we still have… I used to think an awful lot of my boss. I have known him since I was 15 years old. But, my working relationship to him with, yes, I've got a working relationship with him at the end of the day. We have to communicate. But, there is nothing. I won't lie to you. I can't look at him without feeling resentment and an element of hate [Does he know that, do you think?] He wouldn't care about that (Farm Worker 15)

Delving deeper, workers who said they were satisfied and felt valued admitted that this wasn't always the case;

> I do think sometimes I'm taken for granted a little bit. Um, mainly because I'm like, I'm a pretty nice person and I'm really easy to get along with so I think I can be taken advantage of a little bit (Farm Worker 4)

The occasional overlap between work life and social life implied a level of harmony in the workplace between employers and employees but the nature of relationships reveals no distinct, homogenous pattern amongst holdings.

> Yeah, good actually. Good working relationship and we also sorta socialise quite well here as well so you sorta see em on a social side as well which is good [So they hold events and…?] Yeah yeah [Can you tell me a bit more about that?] Yeah. Meals out. Christmas time, and then at the end of harvest they put on something as well and the dairy guys sort of go out for a meal together every month or so, so every few weeks we just sort of get together and have an evening together locally in a pub and something to eat and sit and relax, so yeah, it's good [Sounds nice. Do you ever work alongside them?]: Yeah, yeah [And do you think that's important?] What, as in the bosses or people in generally you mean? [The bosses] Yeah, um, no, don't work alongside them as in general work but we obviously do see them for team meetings and things like that so yeah, yeah, no its good to see them because obviously it's good to have that contact so that they're not just a distant person that there is something you can relate to basically, yeah (Farm Worker 2)

As with contractors, it is likely that temporal, financial and spatial constraints create boundaries to the development of deeper relationships on many of the farms, regardless of type or size.

Farm Worker 15 reported the relationship with his employer being conducted 99% by telephone, with almost no social or physical interaction.

> [Do you ever spend time with him socially?] Never. He's never ever taken us out or done anything (Farm Worker 15)

Employers appeared not to differentiate between staff according to gender during interviews, apart from the following two farmers:

> We've got a goat unit and that actually lends itself better to females (Farmer 20)

> She does the sheep as women are inclined to do because you know, it's difficult to, well, you now, sheep are sheep and they can be very frustrating, and she has great empathy with them and treats them with kindness and love, whereas I tend to give them a kick up the arse if they're in the wrong place (Farmer 16)

Farmer 16 relays a similar perception that women are more efficient at working with livestock in his description of work fulfilled by his wife on the farm. This view is echoed by a female farm worker.

> For a woman, like my mum, me. We're always better at calf rearing. When we have employed people, they've never done such a good job, and it's always a male. And it's because their maternal instinct isn't the same. You know, and I think that is true. You know, with calves and stuff, it's your maternal side, I guess (Farm Worker 12)

6.3 The Mobile Phone as an Actant in the FLC Lifescape

Farm worker 15 is not the only one to only communicate with his employer by mobile phone. Farmer 20 also admits that she and her husband spend little time physically working alongside their employees;

> [How often do you work alongside the workers, would you say?] Physically, very difficult, for the satellite units, but we're on the phone all the time and visiting regularly. Back here [Partner Farmer K] is out on the ground every day. We're in contact with them all the time (Farmer 20)

Telecommunications and especially the mobile phone have completely changed farm management methods. It provides a means by which each of the types of farm labour contributor can communicate. It can create a wider physical chasm between individuals, yet provide comfort and support during moments of doubt and isolation. This is echoed by Wallis (2011) who, in describing the mobile phone, recognises that 'its portability, obliteration of constraints of space and time, and the way it plants a fixed number on a mobile population all seem to make the mobile phone in and of itself an agent of social change' (ibid: 472). The mobile phone is now part of the cultural repartee of the farm labour contributor and its benefits are manifold; social, cultural, health and safety, economic and in some cases, surveillance. The mobile phone allows the boss of Farm Worker 15 to manage him from a distance. Donner (2009) suggests that the mobile phone blurs the distinction between lives and livelihoods. This is corroborated by respondents, especially contractors, where the functionality of the mobile phone enables customers to get hold of them whenever they like leading to a lack of detailed communication and thus planning. According to Donner, 'conversations between longstanding clients may often be to check in and build rapport, trust and social capital rather than to transact any discrete business' (Donner 2009: 93).

Equally, the mobile phone has been blamed by employers for the ability it provides an employee to avoid communication, by switching it off, or even to serve as a distraction, leading to potential damage to themselves or the machinery they are operating. Contractor 8 attributes a heated dismissal of an employee to irresponsibility associated with mobile phone use.

> Wrote a tractor off once […] yapping on that thing (points to phone) when they shouldn't be […] Total loss, thirty forty grand (Contractor 8)

The telephone is therefore a very active agent in the farm system. Its presence or absence plays a key role in health and safety on and off the farm, and constraints such as a lack of signal could have potentially fatal consequences for some farmers, farm workers and contractors.

> I carry me phone all the time but half the time you ain't got no signal anyway! (Contractor 2)

Contractor 2's son mentions the lack of signal in his narrative of his father's heart attack that he suffered whilst at work.

> We was out at [Village X], steeping a hedge, middle of nowhere, no signal on the mobile phone. It was cold and wet and your pick up wouldn't come through the gateway so you left 'im out the other side. And he was bracing out cutting the sides off and I was steeping laying the hedge. I heard the pick up horn going beep (Contractor 2's son)

Poor signal rendered the phone useless, suggesting that any current reliance on mobile phones for health and safety reasons in the contemporary agricultural climate in the South West might be both misleading and dangerous. Whilst the phone has bridged some aspects of social isolation arising from fewer people working in close proximity to one another (farmers, other contractors or farm workers), until rural communication networks are improved, a hazardous gap remains.

6.4 Knowledge and Farm Worker Empowerment

Traditionally, the implication has been that the employer, the manager, or the foreman is in possession of more skill or knowledge than the employee. Attributed to the accruement of more traditional forms of particularistic knowledge and length of time working on a holding, this assumption was confirmed attitudinally by workers in Newby's study (1977) where almost 60% of farm workers state that 'farmers know what's best for the farm and workers should just do what they are told' (ibid: 371), and fewer workers believing that they could manage a farm better than farmers. Although not directly related to knowledge, the implication was that part of the legitimacy of the farmer's position of authority reflected his ability, knowledge and decision-making processes. Knowledge transfer would then, by default, be acknowledged as a top-down process even if the reality might have been slightly different. For some farm workers, this downward flow of knowledge is still dutifully recognised.

> [Ok. Is it important to you to work alongside [Farmer X] sometimes?] Yeah. Cos I think working with the likes of [Farmer X], [Farmer Y], and even [Farm Worker Z], cos [Farm Worker Z's] been 'ere fifty years, you do gain, you learn stuff every day. It's kind of adding to your learning experience, really. So, I think it is good that you can work with others. But then its best, sometimes you learn on your own by making odd mistakes (Farm Worker 6)

However, rapid developments in technology and machinery and the scurry to keep up means that knowledge transfer now flows multi-directionally between actors. Farmers,

farm workers, contractors, machinery manufacturers, agronomists and other external agents feed into and exchange skills and know-how, affording a new kind of power to farm workers.

> We changed our system completely. Everything we did, we changed it and then, like, [Apprentice X] who I was working with, I said to mum, well it's quite difficult that he's left and now I have to teach someone new what we do. Cos when we changed the system, me and my mum and dad, we didn't know that system either, so the apprentice learned that system with me then, we learnt it together. So we discussed it. What was the best way of doing this? And he was like, no no, that's the wrong way to do it, so then I'd try what he wanted to do, and then over sort of a year, we learned together how those machines worked, the software, all that sort of stuff. How the animals reacted to it. So it's the sort of thing we learned together […] I'd be down there trying to figure out something on the robots, milking the cow, and I wouldn't be able to figure it out so I'd sort of ring him up and say, can you come and sort this out please, cos I don't know how to do it. So that was nice for him wasn't it. And it was probably quite a good thing for me to learn that actually someone else actually knows better than me (Farmer 2)

Winter (1997) recognised that 'farmers will need new knowledge and skills so that their role as custodians of the natural environment and of food safety is performed to the satisfaction of the wider citizenry' (ibid: 369-370), a reality that has gained increasing importance over the last thirty years, adding an additional priority to knowledge transfer networks. This will be discussed further in chapter nine. The importance of this here lies with how skill and knowledge can act to empower the farm worker in the farmer-farm worker dynamic, potentially causing a shift in traditional authority systems, as demonstrated by Farmer 2.

6.5 The Farm Labour Contributor and the Animal

> *Our behaviour, our lives and our destiny are directed in part by the shadow of the beast. Let us, therefore, turn our sociological attention to this neglected area of social causation* (Bryant 1979: 417)

Gray's (1999) analysis of the shepherd in his study of hill farms in the Scottish borders naturally incorporates the place of the sheep in his theories of attachment, space and place. He describes how 'shepherds create meaningful places in terms of the movement of sheep around the hills' (ibid: 449). Yet the animal as an agent forming part of the network of the farm labour contributor, other than the farmer (Buller and Morris 2003; Yarwood and Evans 2006) forms a limited part of sociological research more generally. Human-animal interactions are often only examined when the status

quo is out of alignment, in the case of circumstances such as the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001 (Convery 2005).

Wilkie (2015) points out that agricultural animals were, up until the 1990s, classified legally as 'products' or 'goods', reducing them to 'any other agricultural resource such as wheat and potatoes, […] that could be processed as such' (ibid: 327). Later reclassification as 'sentient beings' in 1999 (Camm and Bowles 2000 :200) altered the perception of livestock slightly, but their role as key agents in the emotion of the agricultural lifescape has only been acknowledged more recently. Convery (2005) reveals how the foot and mouth crisis and its resulting destruction of vast numbers of animals proved immensely disruptive to farmers, families and local communities. The burning pyres of carcasses not only symbolised loss of capital but also the rupturing of 'ways of being in the world' (ibid: 100) Wilkie states that 'the extensive time and energy expended on (re)constructing, (re)negotiating and (re)affirming this nebulous natural-cultural nexus clearly shows how culturally significant this interspecies frontier is' (2013: 328).

Attachment to animals

Respondents were reluctant to reveal the role played by these animals in their own lifescapes but gradual disclosure of deep attachments to the animals they worked with, with five respondents citing working with animals as being the most enjoyable aspect of the job, made the importance of livestock apparent.

> Um, there's ones that have just got personality traits that endear themselves to you. Like, we have to cross a local road so about a third of where we graze the cows is across this local road, so putting the cows across and that, you get ones that decide that they're gonna be wanting a scratch and things like that, there the ones that kind of grab your attention. They seek you out occasionally (Farm Worker 1)

> Yeah. One or two, you know, one or two that I prefer. When you're dealing with 500 milkers plus the same number of young stock, a lot of them do just blend into one. As in, they're just a number. Yeah, there are ones that stand out though. Yeah, a handful. Yeah (Farm Worker 11)

> When you do it on a day to day basis, there's always the ones that stand out. You know, I have lots of sheep to go through, in my time I think I've probably handled over a million sheep. But there's still, in amongst that, characters that stand out. So I just remember the characters, but also, you know, remember that they're only here for one reason inevitably (Farm Worker 15)

Farm Worker 15 blends the ability to become emotionally attached to an animal with the acknowledgement of the inevitability of their purpose on the farm, a common response from farmers and farm workers to this question.

> I always have memories of animals. I always enjoy looking after them while they're here. But inevitably, every animal has to go at some point in time, like humans, so I just enjoy the characters that stand out along the way. That's how I always think of it (Farm Worker 15)

Some farm labour contributors state how they feel no emotional attachment, usually relating it to the same sense of inevitability.

> I think really, I've been taught. Well, not taught but I've grown up to know what the process is with animals unfortunately (Farm Worker 12)

> Yeah, I suppose you do get attached to them. But you can't get too attached that, here you know that most of them are going for meat, so you can't get attached in that way (Farm Worker 6)

> No. I learned from an early age that it was just something that happened. So, you become sympathetic with the animals. You understand them and you become, you know, you live up to, it's hard to say. In the winter when you see them every day, you become symbiotic with them. You understand them and you understand what they need. And you understand what they see in me. So, in my stature walking into their pen, they see a person that feeds them. They don't see a farmer, or the tractor driver. They see food. Or the beginning of their daily routine. So, they know that I'm gonna provide them with some food, and then the rest of their day fits into that. So, it's quite nice to be part of that cycle of their day. Because the rest, you know, if I see them for an hour a day, the other 23 hours they're doing their own thing. So, it's a really weird environment. But I'm never upset. Death is part of our daily grind. It's part of, I always say, death is part of the meat industry, it is just something that goes on. You know, sheep die, cows die, all the time. All through our year. If you were upset about it, you'd tear yourself up. I think a farmer can get very upset by it because they get involved in the breeding cycle and the breeding history of something, and the bloody thing goes and hangs itself up in a fence. That must be soul destroying. But I don't get that deep into farming, so I don't get that deeply involved, I suppose (Farm Worker 8)

One farmer described how some cows became so favoured amongst herself, her family and the workers that they were pulled out of the breeding pens and looked after

as pets in a field next to the farmhouse, a sentiment that was shared by some farm workers.

> They are your pets, and sort of your children in a way. You know, what I remember on TB tests, and this is really horrible, I was like 'ah, this is my favourite heifer', put her in the crush and it was like, mmmm, she had TB and had to go and I was, deep down, quite upset about it, but you know. Because, you know, you see them every day, you, you wouldn't want any harm to them. You know, you'd almost put them in front of yourself sometimes, which is even more mental but, but, you know. Your job is to make sure that they are happy and healthy and comfy and, when you can't do that, it's horrible (Farm Worker 3)

Few farm workers had ever subscribed to or even heard of a trade union but when asked why so few farm workers go on strike, many responded in terms of the animals.

> I think farm workers realise, especially people working with animals, that there's no way that you could go on strike because the last thing you wanna be doing is affecting or neglecting any animals (Farm Worker 2)

> [Why do you think they don't go on strike?] Because you can't. Because someone has to milk the cows, and if the cows don't get milked then I personally would feel too guilty about that to even consider doing it (Farm Worker 3)

> Other jobs you can just walk away from it but like farmers, you know you've got to be there to feed livestock, else you just affecting their lives so that farmers and farm workers generally love their livestock so they just don't wanna see them suffer (Farmer Worker 6)

The acknowledgement that one's behaviour might need to be adapted in accordance with a particular animal affords the animal the agency in that particular situation. For those working with livestock, hours worked and external commitments were all dependent on timings associated with livestock. A sense of commitment, obligation, responsibility and need to nurture were high on many farm labour contributors' working priorities. The needs of the livestock with regards to feeding times, milking times etc dictate the life of the worker, to some extent. Technical choices towards robotisation of milking parlours demonstrate a new shift away from this tie, but many workers expressed disinterest or suspicion towards this movement, suggesting that farming of livestock will always require a 'human touch'. Several farm workers pointed out that rapid developments in technology, such as robotic dairies, might prove detrimental to the health and well-being of animals as:

> When you're milking you see all the cows. They come past you, they walk past you. You get to actually see them and you have to see them because you can't, you can't milk with your eyes shut so…I think it's really important from a health and welfare point of view (Farm Worker 3)

Results such as these clash somewhat with modern-day rhetoric associated with poor conditions of animals or lack of care (Newkey-Burden 2017).

Several rued the suggestion of any emotional attachment, but still expressed a significant level of responsibility and care.

> All your animals, you do your best for them. So you try to make it so they want for nothing. So yes, you ultimately know what's gonna happen to them, but you don't wish them any harm (Farm Worker 17)

> I mean, obviously, you do the best you can for them but no, I wouldn't say I get emotionally involved with them (Farm Worker 2)

It might be relevant to note that although Farm Worker 2 works on a farm with livestock, he doesn't work directly with the animals at any point.

Knight (2005) refers to studies of animals 'as *subjects*, rather than *objects'* as '*parts* of human society rather than just *symbols* of it' and in terms of 'human *interactions* and *relationships with* animals rather than simply human *representations of* animals (ibid: 1, original emphasis), definitively demonstrated by the human-animal relationships that arise from the farm lifescape. Although their agency is physically limited as they exist under anthropogenic modes of control, the identities of many farm labour contributors are strongly linked to the animals, beyond economic reason. Rather than regard livestock as a subject alone, ANT enables them to be perceived as a species alongside our own that are 'symbolically and materially entangled with each other' (Wilkie 2015: 330)

> Yeah. I get quite attached. To certain ones, and maybe not in a positive way. Sometimes you can see a cow and you absolutely hate her, but you know, she's sort of like, you'd be a bit upset if she wasn't there. Um, yeah, like there's this one cow, 1967, [Farm Worker X] had probably told you about some of the cows as well but, she, she calved for the first time last autumn calving, um and she's just been like, she's just an absolute mongrel. Like, she'll kick the cups off every milking regardless, and she's been in full-time milk for six months and she'll do it every time! Um, but if you're out, like, scraping or um, checking the feed, she'll always come up for a scratch, regardless! So, I reckon she just kicks the cups off so you go back and give her a scratch and then put them back on, type thing. But the calves, I always get attached to the calves that you know are

> gonna die. Like, the ones that are really scrawny, yeah. And [Farm Worker X] is just like, don't do that, they're gonna shoot it, you know. It's gonna die and I'm like, oh don't say that. And they always go to die. But I think that may be because I came from a small farm so, um, there was this one instance where we were, um, I think I was about fifteen and we had a cow that calved and she couldn't get back up, and, on a regular farm you'd go and get the hip lifters and you'd lift her up. But, we didn't have a tractor, and we didn't have hip-lifters so, you know, at that point you'd probably be like, well, you probably just shoot her, you know, like it's not worth the time and the money. But, my dad got the three of us and himself and my mum, with like two bits of rope, we rolled her over and put the rope under and then slung it over the top, and lifted her up over the railings and then, sort of tied her there, um, and we did that every day for two weeks until finally she just stayed up on her own without needing to, like, hoist her over the railings. And I've told people that story and they've been like, well, why would you bother, wouldn't you just shoot her, it seems like a whole lot of effort for nothing. But, you know, when you're farming and your life's the whole flock, and that cow as a calf, and you love farming, you, you farm because, it's not, it's not a making money exercise in that situation. It's because that's what you like to do after work. So I think I've sort of adopted that mentality over here. And I can get a little attached, and I might say to [Farm Worker Y], look this cow's not right, I think we need to do something about it, whereas, I, they'd probably be like, oh just leave her, if she gets any worse, I think I'm like, no we should do something, it's not fair (Farm Worker 4)

Animal agency lies not purely with how they inspire emotion in those who care for them, but also when they transgress the spatial boundaries assigned to them in ensuring the 'orderly functioning of the traditional countryside' (Woods 2011: 193). Woods describes how transgression of spatial boundaries by both livestock (getting out), and wildlife (getting in), can be disruptive, and in this case to the lifescape of the farm labour contributor they can act as potential stressors that can firstly stimulate conflict with other community members, such as through livestock escaping or in public disagreement over culling measures of badgers, and secondly can create personal conflicts with wildlife, such as the badger-TB paradigm or in the case of one contractor, with rabbits.

> There's a lot of animosity, if that's the right word, going on with badger culls and things now, and I think the potential is there for conflict. I think that's the biggest problem with the general public at the moment. The perception that we're just out to kill badgers for the sake of it, whereas it's a much much deeper issue than that (Farm Worker 2)

> One of our most friendly cows reacted to a TB test. That was less than pleasant […] that was pretty gutting. It was pretty pointless. Um, there's an animal there that's done nothing wrong. She's, I'd never lifted her foot for lameness, I'd never treated her for mastitis, um, I think she might have had milk fever once, but generally never missed a beat. Wasn't gonna break any records in terms of production but, just kept doing what she needed to do, and just because the British public prefer badgers to cows, she had to go (Farm Worker 1)

The nature and agency of each category of animal forces the farm labour contributor to cross the boundary from private workspace to public space, ensuring that workscape bleeds beyond the boundaries of the farm, into the greater lifescape of the worker and their off-farm network nodes.

Controls have long been implemented to deal with these spatial transgressions, a rural practice which according to Woods 'can become important performances in the constitution of rural identity and rural communities (ibid: 194). However, the very nature of nature means that the maintenance of these forms of control result in a worker who is subservient to its whim. An enormous amount of time is or has been spent, fixing fences broken by animals, herding livestock that has escaped from the holding, or even shooting badgers (in areas and at times of culling) or, more historically, rabbits. The act of controlling the animal becomes controlling of the human in and of itself. Equally, the domestication of animals such as dairy cows for example, not only creates a subservient creature but due to its time-dependent requirements, a human who is equally subservient to the cow. The arrival of the robotic dairy effectively emancipates both agents from the bind of milking. However, this emancipation is temporary as robotic dairies are vulnerable to break-down at which point the farm labour contributor who is responsible for the machine must use their agency to fix it, or more likely, bring in an external expert to carry out repairs. This act of domestication and efforts to control and make safe the countryside for these performances and activities to remain intact has created a rift between environmentalists, some of whom advocate the reintroduction of megafauna such as wolves and lynx, and farmers, some of whom perceive such wildlife as a threat to their livelihoods (Jepson 2016). Recent discussions concerning rewilding are restimulating fears within agricultural circles of a loss of control over the domesticated animal to the wild again (Monbiot 2013).

Foot and Mouth, 2001

The trauma of the foot and mouth crisis was referred to by each type of farm labour contributor, either prompted or unprompted, as each was affected differently by the crisis. Contractors perceived it from the point of view of the closing of dairy farms, which ultimately steered their businesses in new directions due to changes in

machinery requirements, and land belonging to once regular customers being sold off to owners who either no longer required the use of contractor services or do not farm it at all.

> Of course, contracting had come to a standstill because, you know, you couldn't go from farm to farm […] we'd lost a lot of work because we couldn't go on the farms during the foot and mouth problem (Contractor 4)

> There was quite a few dairy farms around this area, which have all gone and, things really changed in 2001 after foot and mouth. There was a big change after that (Contractor 2)

Numerous farm workers were young when the crisis hit, and yet remember it as 'quite a worrying time'. Farm Worker 6 was still at school but recalls the sensation of not knowing 'today, tomorrow or next week if your livestock could just be taken away from you'. His perception of the role of livestock in his lifescape led to his supposition that if repeated, 'the place would just feel dead'.

Emotional responses to foot and mouth are specific indicators of how livestock represents more than a simple object of production. One farmer told how his family decided to reverse their decision to sell their farm and livestock on the back of foot and mouth, and suggested separation from the animals would have felt differently according to the means by which it occurred.

> We didn't wanna lose them to foot and mouth. It's different, selling them, and losing them to that (Farmer 2)

Part of this reasoning was attributed to how the cows in question embodied a familial and cultural history that was meaningful to him and his family.

> The cows are from my grandparents and bred down over the years. So, it's more of a psychological attachment to them. So, like, now, to give it up would be a massive decision. It would be quite an emotional decision for everyone because those animals are our animals if that makes sense. They're not just anyone's animals […] If we weren't farming, I wouldn't really miss the farm, perhaps, but I would miss the animals (Farmer 2)

He reveals a complex relationship where the animals are the principal cause of stress in his lifescape whilst at the same time being his principal reason for farming.

It appears that attachment to, and a sense of responsibility towards animals can be mutually exclusive with regards to the place of animals in the lifescape of the farm labour contributor, the presence of one does not necessarily dictate the existence of the other. This linkage will be returned to in chapter eight with regards to FLC-land

relationships. The place of the animal in the farming lifescape appears to be neither entirely economically associated, nor emotionally driven, yet their presence appears as inextricably linked to the past and heritage, to present identity-formation and to decision-making processes looking forward to the future.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that traditional models of employment are being displaced by more flexible models involving an ever greater dependence on off-farm workers. Attention is brought to the compositional transitions in labour in the region in order to justify choices for inclusion and exclusion of certain cohorts within the agricultural labour market. It has outlined the relationships between some of the principal *horizontal* actants in the farm labour contributor network, including other farm labour contributors, with an emphasis on models of relationships between farmers and contractors. The interplay between these two cohorts has revealed itself as a dynamic process increasingly under the direct influence of other agents, yet becoming ever-more interdependent as farmers' access to both traditional hired labour and capital declines.

The contractor – farm worker – farmer nexus isn't purely functional. The social and relational elements such as loyalty, trust, friendship and kinship are all implicit in the identity and relationship construction of each of the farm labour contributors.

In the contemporary setting, a symbiotic relationship exists between farmers and contractors. Historically, farms could often run as an insular unit where everything was on-farm, apart from during periods of peak seasonal labour requirements, but the cost and size of machinery and the rapidity of technology growth has caused it to become impossible for small and medium farms to exist without contractors. Whilst at the same time, contractors change, adjust, form and disintegrate according to the spatial and economic movement/fluctuations of the farms themselves. Bigger farms are a threat to contractors because they are able to afford their own machinery, but otherwise, the relationship between farmers and contractors is shown to be based upon a 'pre-modern environment of risk' within which they interrelate (Sligo and Massey 2007). This is due to the enormity of the role played by non-human actants (weather, soil, plants) in their working dynamic.

This symbiosis and interdependence equalises the power and agency dynamic between the two parties. It applies also, to some extent, to farm workers but their power and agency is in fact growing due to labour shortages in the area as well as more general market changes. Their status and ability to deal with fluctuations in their lifescape posits them in a more individualistic position that is perceptibly less dependent upon the farmer and more dependent upon intrinsic motivators. However, the lived experience of each respondent appears to echo Sligo and Massey's (2007)

perception that each ‘may have characteristics of all of pre-modern, modern and post-modern, depending on what facets of their lives they are experiencing’ (ibid: 180).

Mobile phones are both a gift, helping with feelings of isolation and health and safety when working alone, and a curse, blurring public and private boundaries around timings. The ability to communicate with a contractor 24/7 rather than adhering to stricter boundaries traditionally set by the landline telephone contributes to contractor stress.

The research aim of understanding the situation at the place of employment for all farm labour contributors with regards to relationships is effectively outlined in this chapter. The following chapter attempts to fulfil the subsequent aim of understanding how FLCs relate to additional agents at work within their lifescapes.

Chapter Seven: Land and Nature: Introducing Vertical Network Relationships

> *All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts […] The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land* (Aldo Leopold 1966: 219)

7.0 Introduction

Chapter eight pans out from the horizontal networks immediately adjacent to the farm labour contributor, to include other agents, both horizontal and vertical, thereby illuminating understandings of, and relationships with, the farm, the land and nature. Following an analysis of farm labour contributor locations in relation to their workspaces, perceptions of their relationship to the farm as an entity- the place, the space within which they work - will be provided. This is followed by an examination of how they relate to the land and the environment, stimulating questions around responsibility that were first brought to light in chapter four. Such inquiry provides the perfect space for questions regarding perceptions and understandings of sustainable intensification. Overall, this chapter considers not only place attachment and nature-connectedness, but how transformations within farming ultimately impact, and are impacted by each of these. Understanding perceptions of self and place within the framework of the farming landscape is key to further understanding how farm labour contributors perceive their roles in relation to responsibility and sustainable intensification.

7.1 The Farm Worker and the Farm

7.1.1 A Note on Spatial Distribution

According to Feldstead et al (2005) the physical organisation of workstations and workplaces contributes to the individual's acquisition of 'a sense of identity and selfhood' (ibid: 3). Physical organisation is separated into three clusters; the collective office, working at home and working on the move. In farming, the home has often been situated within the overall, broader workplace, which has set it apart from most other industries since the industrial revolution. The unique peculiarity of this work-space situation is still often the case for many farmers, especially on small farms. But farm-centred communities (Newby 1977), where farm workers live at their place of work, have declined significantly over the last fifty years, meaning that the farm as a workspace might potentially now be viewed differently by some who work on farms.

Newby's data revealed that a total of 61.8% of surveyed farm workers lived in tied accommodation in 1972 (1977: 188), with 54.1% of those physically living 'on-farm'. Farm-centred communities were a move away from occupational communities, where the majority of local people worked in farming and had a shared understanding of the world; a transition resulting from industrialisation. As agricultural workers gradually approached minority status in the village, rifts between themselves and newcomers created both a physical and an emotional separation of the two groups, or encapsulation. The rise in rental costs and the decreasing availability of local authority housing during the twentieth century 'forced' many workers into tied accommodation (Newby: 331). The impact of this on relationships between farm worker and farmer is described in the previous chapter. But since then, new patterns have emerged with regards to worker locality. Out of the 17 case study farms in this study, 13 employed some kind of hired labour who were neither a family member nor a contractor. Of these 13, only two offered housing as a condition of employment to all of their staff (Figure 7.1). Of three farms offering accommodation to any number of full-time staff, two of them belonged to the group of largest holdings amongst all case studies. This might suggest that the ability to offer accommodation is a function of farm size, but the sample is too small to make this claim.

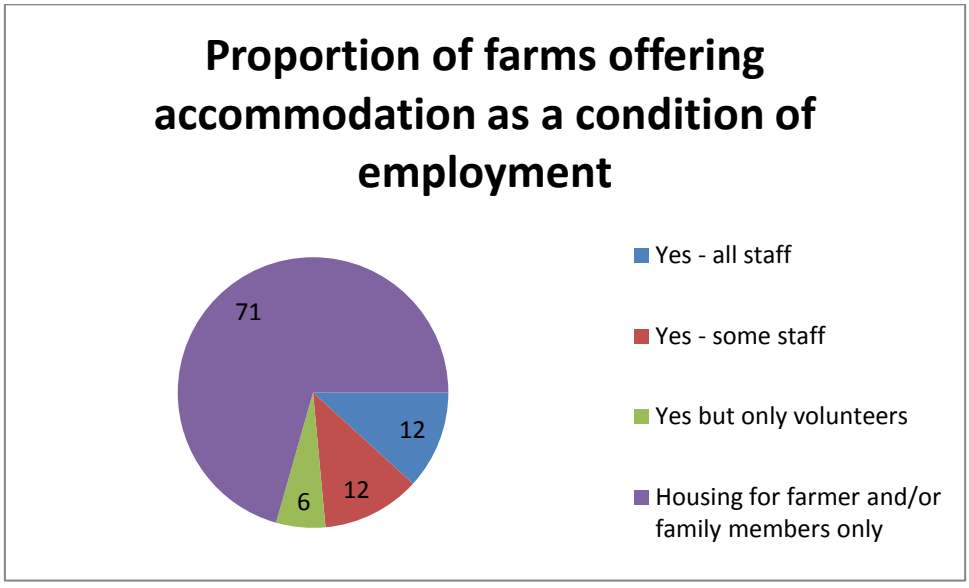

Figure 7.1 Proportion of farms offering accommodation as a condition of employment (*Source*: Interview data)

Farm workers not provided accommodation either owned or rented accommodation, or in the case of some of the younger respondents, lived with their parents. Often, lodgings were located close to the farm, but due to rising housing costs in local villages, the place of origin of the worker, and increased affordability of motor vehicles, this wasn't always the case. Figures 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4 present examples of distances

travelled by the different types of worker to their place of work, from the point of view of the farm as the case.

Study Farm 1

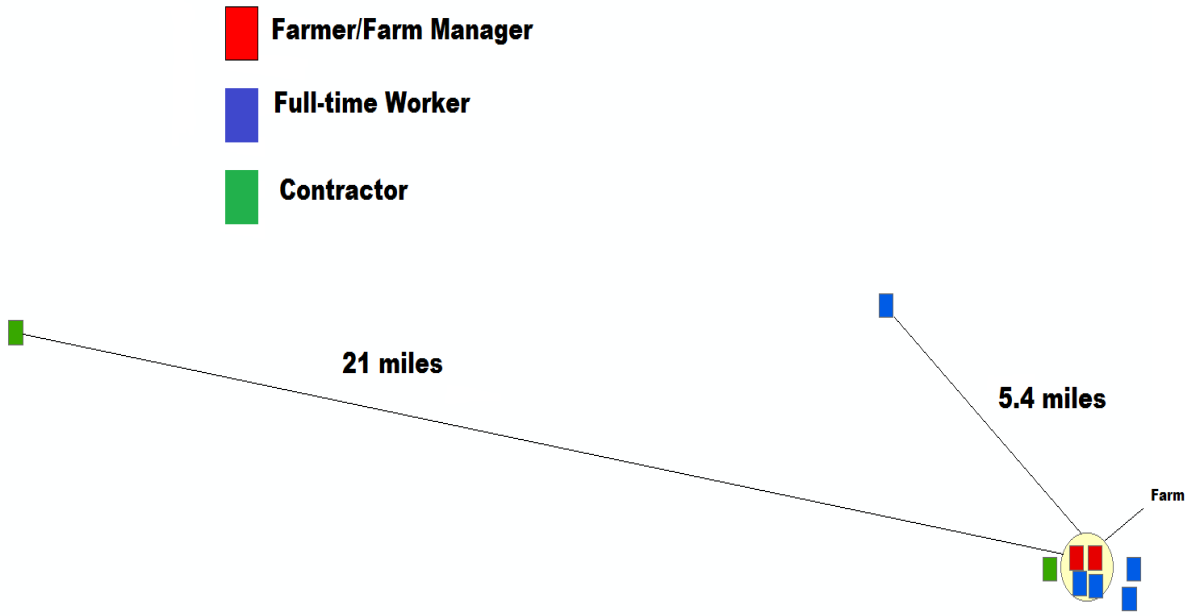

Figure 7.2

Study Farm 2

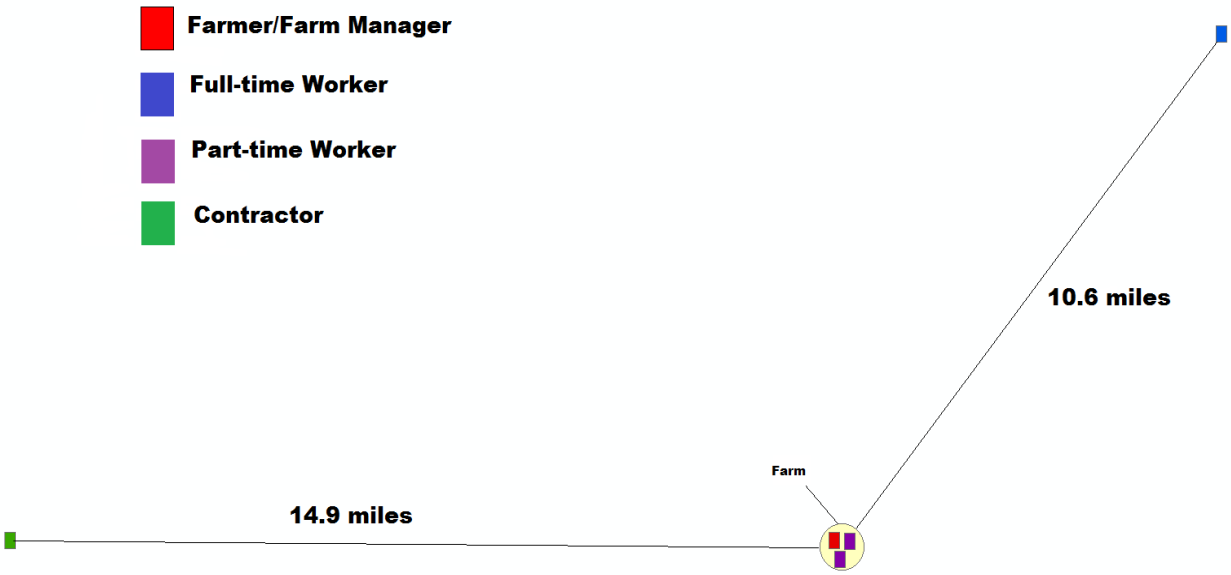

Figure 7.3

Study Farm 3

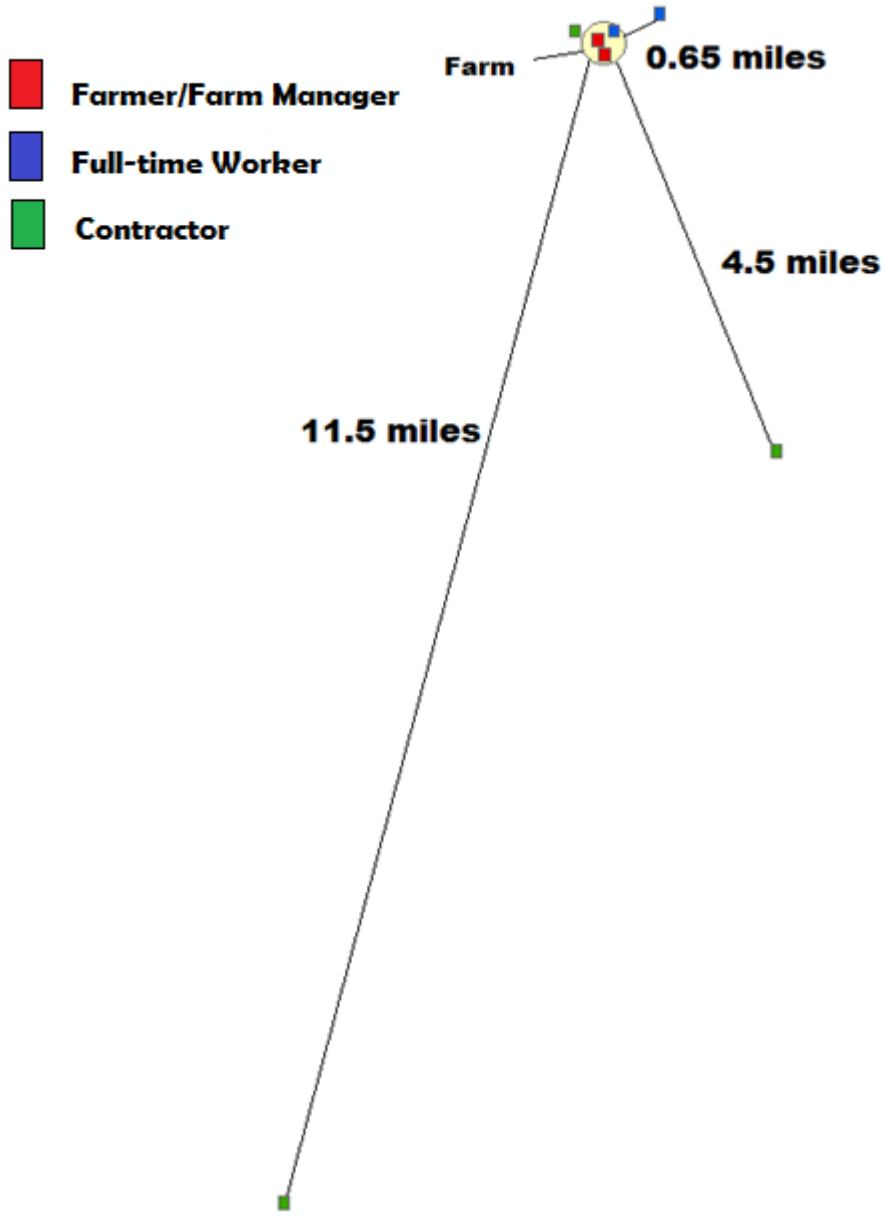

Figure 7.4

(All of the above distances are geodesic or 'as the crow flies')

These locality maps demonstrate that contractors and farm workers tend to be spatially spread out in terms of the local farm community. So, apart from the farmer or farm manager who in all but two of the seventeen farm cases were based on the farm, the contemporary farm labour contributor might travel up to 25 miles to reach the workplace. This tends to be less for the farm worker than the contractor but a travelling distance of 10.6 miles was still revealed by one apprentice worker (case study farm 2).

7.1.2 How do Farm Labour Contributors Perceive Themselves in Relation to the Farm?

Although the farm labour contributor's workspace has differed markedly since the onset of industrialisation to most other types of worker, the space and place of their work has also inevitably played an important role in their acquisition of identity. The nature of farm work means numerous other factors have also played, and continue to play a significant role in this identity formation, due in part to the size and variation in and of their workplace and work tasks, as well as their direct influence over the land and, to some extent, the landscape. Newby (1977) describes agriculture as being 'surrounded by a set of symbolic boundaries which separate it off from other types of employment and create an air of uniqueness with which farmers and farm workers alike identify' (ibid: 279). Gray attributes this kind of identity formation to the process of 'place-making'. In his case, where shepherds in the Scottish borders were the subject of study 'in creating places in the hills and forming attachments to them, people also implicate a historicised image of themselves as people of the Scottish borders' (ibid: 440). This section proposes that similar perceptions exist amongst many of the respondents in this study, and explores how identities are invariably tied up in aspects outside of simply the work situation.

7.1.2.1 Relationships as consubstantial

Prior studies have acknowledged the connection between the farmer and the farm. Gray (2000) described the sense of shared essence between the farmer and their farm as *consubstantiality,* a term echoed by Burton (2004) who states that 'the farm is not simply an object, it is consubstantial with the farmer and […] is the very part of the farmer that is used to express his/her and his/her family's identities, both to other members of the farming community and to the world in general' (ibid: 208). Although Gray later considered the place of the shepherd in a follow-up analysis to *At Home in the Hills*, the absence of other more general farm workers in these analyses is clear. Newby (1977) refers to how farm workers develop an identity from the work that they do, as discussed in chapter five, but he fails to further explore connections between the worker and the farm as an entity in any depth.

Interview data attests to Gray's idea of consubstantiality with regards to the farmers interviewed. Some articulated perceptions of their identities in terms of their farms similarly.

> This is me. End of story. You know, if I get divorced, which I have been before, my wife would cite the farm. Why can't we go out? Because I wanna be on the farm. You know. I enjoy doing it (Farmer 17)

Whilst farmer 10 describes how people in the farming community identify you not by your name, but by your farm, implying place and person are akin to one another – synonymous and interchangeable entities that are recognised by others as intertwined.

> It's part of your life, it's part of who you are […] I dropped into agricultural engineers and I went in and he said, I recognise your face. I said [Farm X, Location X]. He said I know which farm you came from. You know what I mean. And I think that's it, you know. The two are very linked. People know you as that, sort of thing. [Farmer XX of Farm XX], [Farmer XXX of Farm XXX] [..] if you say [Farmer X of Farm X], they'll say, oh yeah, I know who you are. You know what I mean? Because everyone knows the area and especially on some of the large families, people don't necessarily, they might have the same Christian name as somebody else but they haven't got the same farm. And the two are very linked (Farmer 10)

One farmer revealed how he wanted to continue his connection to this farm by having his ashes scattered following his death.

> I want to be cremated and I want the ashes spread back on the farm. That's home, and that's where I wanna finish. And that's what I wanna do (Farmer 15)

Prendergast et al (2006) describe how such a choice allows an individual 'to be more firmly re-inscribed within the times and spaces which constituted their life history and social identity' (ibid: 889). Their perpetuity as a member of their previous lifescape is ensured by literally becoming one with the land, the soil and consequently, the farm.

Farmer 15 expresses his connection to his farm in terms of not knowing anything other than that.

> All I've done is move from that bedroom to that bedroom, in fifty years, and that's it. It's all I've done, I've gone nowhere else. We had a school reunion ten years ago, when we were all forty, and, oh where are you living now? Oh, still at the farm. What you haven't moved? No. Oh, well, well we've gone from here to there and done this and this. And I said, no. What you're still doing the same job? Yeah. Oh, ain't that boring? Well, no, cos that's all we do. We're farmers. You know. We don't keep moving around, as such. I mean some people do, but yeah, no this is home really [So if you did have to move […] what would be the

> most difficult bit, would it be leaving the farm, would it be leaving the area, or would it be leaving the community?] The farm (Farmer 15)

His suggestion of a rather insulated life appears to have occurred through choice, but other factors clearly contribute to the need for him to always be close to the farm. With an average hourly working week set at 90 hours, Farmer 15 worked longer hours than any other respondent[13]. He largely worked alone apart from his 76 year old father who assisted in feeding the cows, and his business was dairy only, meaning that, without other labour, he was physically tied to the farm for milking requirements. He implies that a deeper bond is created due to this very physical attachment, suggesting that farm attachment develops exponentially with time.

But this sense of experiencing a shared essence with the farm was not exclusive to the farmer. Farm workers described a similar sense of their place of work embodying their sense of self. For these workers, being a part of the farm goes beyond the development of an occupational identity. Interestingly, only one of these workers is provided with tied accommodation, and it is off-farm, suggesting physical locality is only partially responsible for the presence of consubstantiality.

> You become part of it. It's quite weird. The land and the sky and the weather coming at ya. Because you see it all, and you can sense it coming (Farm Worker 8)

> If I had to leave, it would be like, a big part, well, cos I've been here four years now, it would be a big part just gone, if you know what I mean (Farm Worker 9)

> It's where I should be. It's where I wanna be (Farm Worker 14)

> [So you feel like you've really invested a lot. Would you say that you're part of that farm now?] It would be in a very different place to what it is now if I hadn't (Farm Worker 15)

There exists a sense that they are part of the farm, that the farm is a part of them, or that there is a general inevitability about their placement on the farm. The sense is partial, rather than total, patterns that mirror Gray's (2000) typology of the farmer's relationship to the farm being encompassing and whole, while the shepherd's is encompassed and part. Despite this 'partness', such responses suggest that the place of employment for the farm worker is integral to their lifescape rather than merely being a site constituting an instrumental purpose.

[13] Although not all respondents were able to quantify their working hours as an average rate.

7.1.2.2 Relationships as a connection

Other farm workers did not attribute their connection to the farm to a sense as strong as a shared essence, but substantial connections still surfaced. On being asked what, if they had to leave, the farm, the people on the farm, the community or the general area, would be the most difficult element to leave, a number of farm workers stated the farm as being their greatest connection.

> [Which would be worse for you. Having to leave the farm, leave the general area, leave the people, or leave the community?] Probably leaving the farm, yeah (Farm Worker 1)

> [So, if you did have to leave, would the worst part of it be leaving the farm, the area, the people, or the village?] The farm [That would be the worst part for you?] Yeah (Farm Worker 12)

> [What would be worse for you, having to leave the farm, having to leave the area, or having to leave the community?] I think if we were to leave the farm, I think we'd move away […] I'd move away from the area all together and start again […] But if it wasn't here anymore and I wasn't here anymore, I would not wish to see it every day and not be here (Farm Worker 17)

What emerges from this data is how the meaning of the farm represents different things to different people and is a signifier of how linked all aspects of farming are. The farm, officially, refers to the place of work. But for many respondents, 'the farm' includes not just the space as determined by geographical boundaries, but also people, animals, the area and the community. Essentially, the term farm for them signifies 'place' – 'the union of land, people, and community' (Hayes-Conroy 2007: 14).

> [The farm, the area, the people, or the community?] Probably the farm, cos, somewhere else you get more involved in the community but the people you work for is kind of 90% of your life sometimes [So you see it as all tied in? The people and the farm and the land?] Yeah (Farm Worker 6)

Farm Worker 15 couldn't identify one element that he'd miss more than another, describing a possible sense of loss would be felt due to 'a multitude of all things'. Farm worker 3 also found it difficult to attribute any hierarchy of emotion to the people, the farm or the area as separate elements.

> The people and the farm together really. I'm not that fussed about the community, to be honest, because, I'm not really that involved in it at all. I like

> the people here. But I also do really like the farm and I do like, I do like the area (Farm Worker 3)

This question allowed for meanings around the farm to be unveiled as ascribing place identity rather than merely place dependence. Place identity refers to symbolic and emotional meanings attached to the farm setting, whilst place dependence pertains to 'the functional utility attributed to the setting' (Kyle and Chick 2007: 209). This feeds in to the concept of the lifescape, as the farm is the setting of economic function and yet deeper attachments are felt apart from this aspect.

How does the contractor relate to his workscape – the farm and the land?

Prior to this examination, it seems important to present the unique working circumstance of the agricultural contractor, and understand why they are considered under the lifescape umbrella rather than simply that of the workscape. Both are relational concepts which incorporate aspects of the working life of an individual after all.

Feldstead et al (2005) describe the workscape as follows;

> The total network of workplaces and workstations that are occupied by individuals or groups in the course of their employment' 'comprise the specific sites in which individuals or groups conduct work tasks and, crucially, the channels of communication and transportation that link them (ibid: 16)

Feldstead et al (2005) also acknowledge the significance of networks in an individual's working life, many of which might have a direct or indirect effect on the land, landscape or the environment. But often these effects will only be witnessed or understood conceptually by the worker. Whereas the work of the farm labour contributor is inextricably tied up with nature, the weather, the land, the soil, and their lives are completely dependent upon the behaviour and state of these actants from which it is difficult to set their personal lives or lifescapes apart. As Wuthnow explains, 'a financier might have felt a deep emotional attachment to a bank account and some factory owners were known to feel that way about a steel or cement plant. But those kinds of attachments were probably rare, or at least unexpected' (2015: 120).

According to Feldstead et al's terminology a singular workscape comprises of just one workstation located in one place of work, whilst a plural workscape incorporates numerous workscapes and work stations, necessitating 'movement between a multiplicity of sites' (ibid: 17). Contractors are unique in that often their work involves one workstation moving between a multiplicity of sites, with the site almost always

being determined by the customer rather than the contractor. Their workstation is their cab, their workplace is the land, and their workscape comprises of many fields/parcels of land at varying distances from one another. All contractors interviewed stated that their closest customer was close enough to be pointed at from their kitchen table or office desk. The distance required to travel to their furthest customer proved more varied (Figure 7.5).

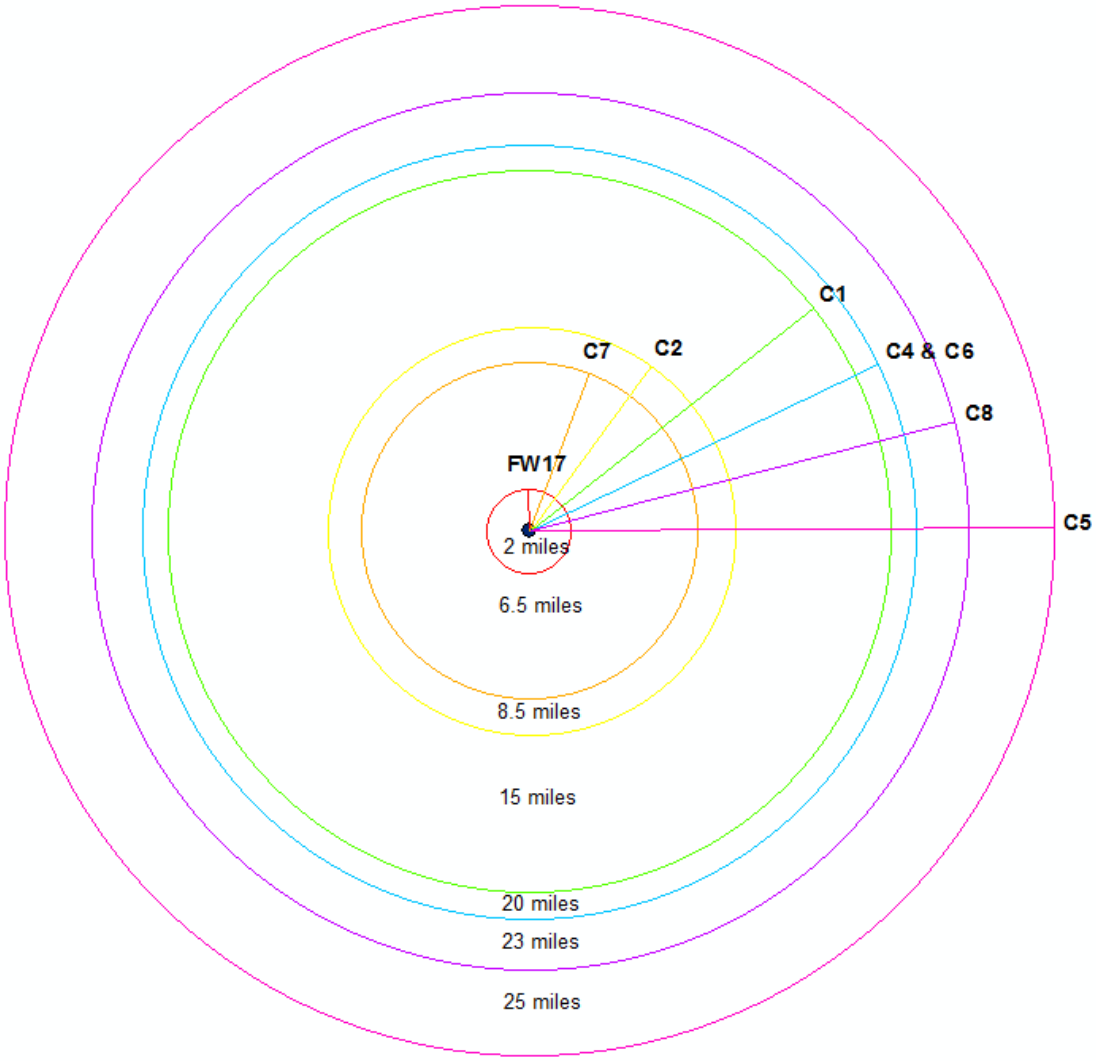

Figure 7.5. Furthest regular customer from business base of all respondents providing contracting services by radius

Table 7.1

Furthest distance travelled to regular customer by business providing contracting services, ordered by distance (shortest to furthest)

ID	Numbers of workers employed for contracting services	Greatest distance travelled to a regular customer
Farm Worker 17	1 part-time contractor	2 miles
Contractor 7	1 worker	6.5 miles
Contractor 2 & 3	2 workers	8.5 miles
Contractor 1	1 worker	10-15 miles
Contractor 4	1-2 workers	20 miles
Contractor 6	8 full-time workers	20 miles
Contractor 8	11 full-time workers	23 miles
Contractor 5	1 full-time, 2-4 part-time workers	25 miles

Both Figure 7.5 and Table 7.1 demonstrate that contractors who employ two or less people tend to travel shorter distances to their regular customers than contracting companies employing more than 2 workers. Farm Worker 17 largely manages a family farm with the occasional help from his father and his contracting business makes up a very small percentage of his overall workload, therefore he travels no further than a couple of miles from his home base. Contractor 5 is the main outlier in this pattern. The reason for this is two-fold. Comparatively speaking, Contractor 5 is still quite new on the contracting scene and he is not a descendent of contractors so has to build his entre business from the ground up. He is still in the stages of establishing and trying to win new customers and so is willing to travel as far as he needs to in order to do this. He also provides a more niche contracting requiring travelling further distances than contractors offering routine contracting services.

Due to the mobile nature and heterogeneity of their workplaces, contractors spoke less of a consubstantial connection to the farms that they worked on. The carving up of the work space with regards to labour on farms and the re(division) of labour means that for contractors, the land they work represents the farm, but their knowledge of the whole farm is partial and limited. Any bonds that emerge from their workplaces are therefore explored in the following section, which looks at the land apart from the rest of the farm as an entity.

7.2 The Farm Worker and the Land

> Land cannot be properly cared for by people who do not know it intimately, who do not know how to care for it, who are not strongly motivated to care for it, and who cannot afford to care for it (Berry 1991: 390)

Wuthrow (2015) describes land as 'the silent partner whose cooperation must be secured' (ibid: 127). It too is an actant with agency in the wider network of the farm labour contributor. Part of the farm, and yet physically separate from the farmhouse and yard, the (re)division of labour means that different farm labour contributors often spend significant portions of their time either in the yard (often with animals), or in the fields (often driving machinery).

How do contractors relate to the land?

A common assumption might be that contractors cannot know the land as the farmer or farm worker, somebody who has spent long periods of time working that land, and therefore if they cannot know, they are unlikely to care for it. Monbiot (2015) implies this in his assertion that there exist 'some terrible farmers […] who allow contractors to rip their fields to shreds for the sake of a quick profit' (ibid:1). However, contractors overall appear to contradict this, maintaining that they too can gain a knowledge of, and connection to, the land.

> We got one customer over there, she rings up and says, oh [Contractor 3], come and do the hedge trimming. Oh there's no point in telling him where to go, he knows the ground better than I do (Contractor 3)

> Oh, you get to know the ground. You get to know where the wet and whatever. But it all depends on the weather. It can change from year to year. You can go there twenty times, no trouble at time, go there another time, the weather's just slightly wrong, you end up taking off or getting stuck or….yeah, and that's all down to experience come the end of it. You get to know if you can go or you can't go (Contractor 3)

> You get, yeah, you get to know the ground. Yeah, you know where the stones are and where the wet spot is and then, when you've got a driver you tell him, yeah don't go down there cos that's wet, that last half acre there is steep, yeah, it's just unbelievable how it all sticks in yer head (Contractor 6)

> If you're there contracting, you almost know their business as well as they do. And before they've rung you up, you can be thinking, oh, we're gonna have to

> go do that farm this week because he's got that to do, and then he picks the phone up. Yeah, I've sort of got it in my head that he'll want us so you sort of know what's happening [So you feel like you know the cycles of different people's farms?] Yeah (Contractor 5)

One contractor stated that he can tell the quality of the soil just by looking at it.

> You can see the soils are deteriorating (Contractor 4)

Although when this was put to contractor 5, he disagreed, saying 'I think the soil's in better condition now than it was years ago'. Contractors, as with farmers (Ingram et al 2010), assign certain characteristics to elements such as the soil and, although less likely to walk the field and physically touch it, by regularly working the same piece of land, they ascertain that a sufficient working knowledge can be gained to confidently express an opinion regarding that element. These differing opinions between contractors might be agronomically legitimate and arise from distinctive farming practices, or may result from the fact that 'different actors in the context of agricultural management will have different perspectives informed by their knowledge, values, interests and experiences (ibid: 51).

As discussed earlier, the contractor might not experience a sense of shared essence as a result of time spent on the farm, but the concept of caring for the land worked was explored in depth from the point of view of all farm labour contributors with regards to contractors. The majority of contractors talked about experiencing a sense of care for the land they worked. Farm worker 17, in discussing his work as a part-time contractor, demonstrated a considered approach to his contracting work.

> [Would you say you know their land pretty well?] Yeah, oh yeah, yeah [Would you say you know it as well as your own or not?] Er, some of it yeah, definitely. I spent a lot of time on some of that land [Ok. And would you say, would you say you care as much about the work you do on their place as the work you do here?] Sometimes more [Really?] Yeah, yeah. I strive to make as good a job as I possibly can, every time I do something. It's just the way it is, isn't it (Farm worker 17)

Often contractors interpreted the term 'care' in terms of actively looking after it rather than an abstract emotional connection.

> Yeah, it's like when you go ploughing and that, you know, there's different things like, you should always throw soil uphill even though the farmer will say, well you can plough it whichever way you want, you always throw it so you keep

> all the soil in the fields. Yeah, you think about the rows, you think about everything (Contractor 6)
>
> The land I farm, I don't try to push it too hard. I like to look after the soil because that looks after me. And some people just take it and they absolutely do what they do to get the best out of it all the time and pull it to death. They don't put back in what they take out. Some of them do, and that's up to them really. But I prefer to look after it because it looks after me (Contractor 8)
>
> [So in terms of the land how do you feel about the land you work on? I mean, obviously there's a difference between your land and other people's land, do you feel connected to it? Do you care about it?] Yeah definitely. You want the best, you want their crop to grow in the best way possible for them. And to be as productive as possible. Farm the land or do the best you can with it [So would you say you look after other people's land the way you look after your own?] Definitely (Contractor 5)

A common theme amongst all contractors in expressing their relationship to the land they work revealed that the sense of care they experienced encompassed not only the land, the soil, and the quality of work, but how this impacted the individuals to whom the land belonged. So although perhaps distinct from the farm workers expression of care, for the contractor, caring for the land means caring also for the farmer, for themselves, and for future generations. Emotional (relationships) and biological (soil health) factors constitute the principle motivators for caring. In looking after these two elements of his lifescape, the contractor is investing in the future both of their business and the sustainability of the agricultural industry in their region. This approach to the land and the customer also contributes to the contractor's status as a 'good contractor' as well as their customer's situation as a 'good farmer'.

7.2.1 Contractors and the land – according to the other farm labour contributors

Some farmer and farm workers dispute these perceptions of contractors caring for the land.

> Obviously sometimes they don't think it's their ground, so they don't mind making a mess. Whereas if we make a mess, you think, hang on, that's just ruined that bit of ground and it's gonna take so long to repair, if you know what I mean, so they might not have so much care on other people's land as, like, we would, or (Farmer X) and that would, as it's their own land (Farm Worker 6)

Interestingly, a distinction was often made between smaller contractors and the larger contracting companies who employ multiple people, by farmers, farm workers and contractors alike.

> [Larger contractor]'s a huge operation, and [smaller contractor] is basically a farmer who does a bit of contracting. So, we feel, we're safer with the farmer who does a bit, so we're like a big fish in a small pond, whereas with [larger contractor], we'd be an average fish in a massive pond, erm, so we feel we get better service. I'm not sure. Whenever we use [larger contractor] now for odds and sods, he's really good. But that's because he wants the rest of the business, so… (Farmer 1)

Farmer 1 attributes a sense of safety to the smaller contractor, suggesting that a shared understanding of farmers, as well as trust, are qualities imperative to both their working relationship and their attitude to the land. Whereas, although the quality of the work performed by the larger contractor is acknowledged, it is regarded as an act performed in order to obtain more work, rather than an intrinsic part of the contractor's emotional attachment to themselves or their land.

> You've got one very commercial contractor who's coming in bang, crash, wallop, doing a job, which most of the time is brilliant because it gets it done. But actually, sometimes it's quite nice to have the other contractors who are a bit more, a bit more like we are about the place (Farmer 1)

In being able to identify with the more 'farmer-like' contractor, Farmer 1 shows preference for the smaller contractor. Whilst almost every farmer expressed overall satisfaction with the work of the contractors they hired, when questioned as to whether any differences could be perceived between the different types of contractor, their perception of the contractor and their land usually matched their articulation of the relationships between themselves and contractors, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

> [Do you think that there's a difference between the types of contractors? Like the one-man band ones […] and the ones that have all the kit. Do you think there's any difference in the way they work on the land? Or do you think they're all much of a muchness?] I would say much of muchness, but the chap I use now would do it as a farmer, but the other ones that got all the big kit and everything else, they'd be doing it to cover as much ground in a day cos that's where they're earning their money, cos they got big kit and you know, that causes compaction on your soil , well it's not their problem because we gotta get, we got a lot to do, we've got all this big massive kit and they'd move on it to

> it. But [smaller contractor] would come in and, you know, if the ground was a bit soft, he'd bring a smaller tractor. You know, if he was just raking up the grass for silaging, he'd put a 70HP tractor on the rake and tootle on all day, whereas the other ones would bring in a 200HP tractor, bloody great rake, and you know, and do it like that. So I wouldn't say that is kind to our farm [So you think the smaller ones care more?] Yeah, they care more about what we want, rather than I've got a thousand acres to do so I'm gonna need all this big kit to do it. [Smaller contractor] would probably turn around and say, right, I'll turn away a bit of work but do what I'm doing properly. You know, so, which for us goes a long way. You know, if you've got somebody moving in with massive kit, you've got to deal with the fallout in years to come. Fields start getting wet because they've been in with a lot of heavy machinery, and you know, well they ain't gonna come in and sort it out. It's my problem. So, yeah, I think our grandfathers would turn in their grave if they saw it (Farmer 15)

Again, the farmer ascertains that large machinery and the need to pay for that machinery creates a distortion in the level of care that larger contractors are able to pay to their land, and that lower outputs mean that the smaller contractor can afford to spend time on caring for the land 'as a farmer' would.

> We have a guy down towards [Town X], he would do our combining, [larger contractor] would do it but [smaller contractor]'s got a smaller, older combine […] so it just makes a better job. Do you know what I mean? I could get [larger contractor] to do it, but it's just, kinda more oldey worldey, if you know what I mean, just take his time, pull out the corners, just like old school people like it. Rather than everything's got so big, it has to be done yesterday. This is kinda like, I will do the job properly. And everybody likes that sort of thing (Farmer 3)

Berry (2015) describes a similar principle in his examination of the forestry industry in the United States, 'in forestry as in farming, low production costs can increase the quality of work and so of care for the land' (ibid: 45). Lower financial costs relieve the pressure felt by bigger businesses bound to higher purchase costs. Conversely, pressures to increase output can, according to Berry, result in 'recklessness' and 'the likelihood of damage' (ibid: 45).

Care is also associated with pride by some of the farm worker contributors. Farmer 1 identifies pride as a consequence of ownership. Pride is linked to Burton's (2004) description of 'the good farmer', social symbolism that is played out in the performance and outcome of work. Whilst Wuthnow suggests that 'the land is the resource from which pride of accomplishment derives' (2015: 127).

> There's no ownership of the place, obviously, with a contractor. So there's very little pride in the place (Farmer 1)

But farm worker 15, although his personal relationship between the smaller and bigger contractors hired by to work at his place of employment was different, perceived the quality of work and attitude towards the land of both as equal.

> I think they're all just there to do the job, and that's it, you know (Farm Worker 15)

Farmer 17 who has used both smaller and larger contractors believes that 'I've been very fortunate. Everybody that comes onto this farm has treated it as their own', echoing the link between a sense of ownership and quality of work.

However, this isn't always the case. Farm Worker 4 describes a contractor who engages in relief milking as well as machinery work.

> I find it quite difficult to work with him, mainly because he's, he is just here to milk the cows, so he doesn't really care […] [He] doesn't care because it doesn't really affect him. Um, so filters could be caked in cow shit and he might not pick up on the 'stitus cows, but he doesn't care, he still gets paid regardless. Whereas, if we did that, as our livelihood, because we're working for the farm, it reflects poorly on us that there are cows that have got mastitis and we find in the afternoon, after doing the milking, oh well, look there's three cows definitely would have been picked out the day before, or the milking before […] And so you try and confront him about it, be like, you know, […] you were a bit messy this morning, or, you know, we found a cow that had quite bad mastitis. Just wondering if you're milking them out properly. And he's just like, ah yeah yeah, got a busy day coming up silaging. And it's like, well that's not what I asked (Farm Worker 4)

Farm Worker 16 differentiated between the small contractor and the larger contractor in terms of their time-frame.

> They gotta get to the next job, ain't they. They rush rush rush (Farm Worker 16)

Only one contractor admitted that speed might occasionally prevail in a job, on being asked if speed, efficiency or quality led the work of himself and his workers.

> Speed is desperately important to me, cos otherwise I can't make it pay. But you got to be top quality as well. If I've gotta slow down, you gotta slow down. You can't just keep going. But the quality of work is the most important thing

> cos otherwise you don't go back again. But speed is, you know, I'm always telling my blokes that they gotta keep going (Contractor 6)

All other respondents probed similarly suggested that quality was always paramount.

> Quality is the most important thing to me, yep. Speed, yes it's nice to be fast cos you earn more money, but at the same hand if you do it fast and the quality's not there, you don't go back (Contractor 7)

Chapter seven described how contractor timing and farmer payment proved a delicate balancing act in the relationship between the two cohorts, referring to the time of arrival of the contractor on the farmer's land; rapidity, last minute availability and special treatment all being expected by the customer. However, customers prefer a reversal of that speed as soon as the contractor has arrived, desiring measured, thoughtful and detailed execution of tasks. Differing behaviours around work are noted and remembered by farmers and time becomes a valuable agent, a resource both to be traded and to win and retain customers. But such expectations can become an additional stressor for the larger, time-short contractor.

> We did use another contractor for a time, the last load of grass would come in, they'd buck rake it up, then they'd be gone. But the chap […] who does it now, you know, the last load of grass comes in, the forager comes back, everybody comes back, and as soon as the last load of grass is put in, them all up on top the pit, they pull the sheets on, they chuck the tyres up, and they do it all before they go. And they never charge us for that. Ah, it's all part of the job, he'd say [Ah, I see, so the other one would just do it without doing that stuff?] Yeah, he wouldn't sheet down, we'd say, can you help sheet down, he'd say oh that's not part of our job. We're here to put it in the pit, we're not here to sheet down. Whereas the other one, the one I use now, he'll stay here for an hour and, like I said, four of five of you here, doesn't take very long, otherwise on your own it's horrendous (Farmer 15)

> We used to have this guy, [Contractor X], who used to come in. We used to get it done. And then we'd all stay there and we'd get the sheet on, so we could just chuck a few tyres around and they'd just give us a hand and do that. And that's the way we always used to do it. And they did (Farmer 3)

Contractors were also sometimes quick to differentiate themselves from the other 'type' of contractor. In the case of Contractor 1, a self-employed contractor who largely worked alone, he referred to the larger contractor firms as 'the big boys'.

> Well, I'll say one customer […] he said this year or last couple of years, we're gone away from self-propelled machines back to trailing machines for foraging. It's not so fast. Coming in to the silage clamp. The farmer […] say tis a lot steadier going on. Years ago, they used to say if they's going too fast it's not so good, and they're beginning to find out with the big boys. The big boys just bury it in grass (Contractor 1)

Fast turnover of work is linked with poor quality of work by the smaller contractors, as is size of machinery and damage to the land.

> And they're using big tractors to do small jobs. I know you gotta have a reasonable-sized tractor now for some of the hedge trimmers. But a lot of the people, like round baling and that, it may be a 180- 200 horse power tractor do to bloody round baling. When a 100 horse power tractor would do it. That's what it seems to be. And them on about the land and the crops. A lot of it is there's too much weight on the land compressing it all the time (Contractor 2)

A disparity in perceptions regarding contractor's relatedness to the land emerged from the interview data, with contractors vigorously asserting a positive interaction, whilst farmers and farm workers appearing less assured that this was always the case. There appears to exist a divergence between knowledge and belief on the part of the contractor. What he believes as his innate desire to care might not always match what he knows to be the reality of a situation. It is likely that all contractors who specified experiencing a sense of care believed it manifested through their work, but those identified by the other farm labour contributors as being led principally by other motivators are likely to knowingly act otherwise as a result of some or all of the constraints mentioned above. Customer pressure, time constraints and cost of machinery act to disrupt how they relate to the land.

7.2.2 Farmers and Land Connection

Farmer 1's connection to the land is multi-layered. He incorporates knowledge of the land with responsibility and family history into his understanding of 'land connection'.

> I guess I just feel like I know it really well, and that's the sort of the connection. And I'm responsible for it, completely responsible for it […] as far as the person that's heading up the team that can affect it, and affect it tomorrow and affect it for what somebody else finds in a hundred years, then, that's us, that's what we're doing. So yeah, from that respect, very much so. And my children were

> born here and grow up in an acre of it up the hill so, you know, we'll always have [Farm X] as that part of their lives (Farmer 1)

Farmer 12 also encompasses the concept of 'everything' when talking about land connection.

> Very much. Very much connected to all of it. What it does, how it works, yeah definitely (Farmer 12)

His -in-tuneness- with his land is something that he feels even if he is away from the fields, but it is linked not only to the land but to the livestock, the weather, the topography and the seasons. Separating each element from the overall network is a challenge.

> I can just, when it rains, and the number of cattle I have in that field, I can almost tell without going to see them, the amount of poaching, you know, the trampling that they've done because each field has, we've got quite sloping fields here and so I can just tell what that field is gonna be like. I can kind of tell what the fields are gonna be like at certain times of year and you know, you kind of know when October/November comes and the type of rainfall you're getting, you kind of know that you've gotta get ready to bring them in and it's the same the other way around, you know. In the spring when you're putting cows out, you're very much in tune with the land (Farmer 12)

Both of these farmers reemphasise the 'whole' farm aspect of Gray's typology, with farmer 12 literally embodying the farm through his intuition.

Farmer 13 describes how a desire for a connection to the land was a significant driver in her move into farming.

> I used to sit on the metal tool box on the combine with [my husband], for hours and hours and hours, just sort of sitting there in all the dust and whatever. But I actually loved it. You know. I loved it. I wanted to farm. I wanted to be connected to the land in some way (Farmer 13)

The concept of ownership came up myriad times during discussions around connections and attachments as mentioned earlier.

> We particularly feel connected at the moment because we've always wanted to own our own land and we never have done but because of the hours and the way we farm and person that we farmed with, and the profits that we've made, have allowed us to buy our own land, and it's completely different when you're

> working your own fields, to working somebody else's. It's great! It's great! (Farmer 13)

A 2013 report on 'farmer attitudes and evaluation of outcomes to on-farm environmental management' (Mills et al) suggests that there is little evidence that 'tenant farmers were more unlikely to undertake environmental activities than owner-occupiers' (ibid: 17). This suggests that the emotion attached to owning land does not correlate with a desire to care for it more. However, the tenant/owner distinction in the Mills et al study does not detail; how many of these farmers have mixed tenure farms; the varying levels of security in terms of tenancy lengths; how many are indebted or mortgaged, all factors which might possibly affect a farmer's tendency to undertake environmental activities on a piece of land.

Many respondent farmers, owner-occupied, tenanted or mixed, recognised themselves as stewards of the land. As some contractors care for the land in the interests of their customers, myriad farmers look after the land in the interests of their children or, more generally, future generations.

> We're just caretakers. Lifetime tenants my husband used to say. That's all we are. So you, you know, you have to look after it for the next generation (Farmer 5)

> It's my life not my job, so I feel connected to it that way. I feel connected to the fact that we alter it. We manage what we're looking at, I won't pretend we always get it right, but we try to. We try to enhance it as well, you know, I just feel like we try to make it a productive, but a better place as well, you know. If we can do the two that would be my aim really (Farmer 14)

Farmer 19's sense of obligation extends beyond simply the farm and the land but also to the farm house, which dates back over a thousand years.

> I see that my role here is only a custodian for a short time when you compare those thousand years and we are only farming it now according to farming trends of the time. So yeah, we are connected (Farmer 19)

Farmer 16 also attributed his connection to place-history, memories, family and nature connectedness.

> I've got a huge connection with the land. I grew up as a sort of boy who would go off, with a four ten would sort of go and camp in the woods for two or three days. And although my father was a good farmer and been educated at

> Cambridge, you know, he was a butterfly collector and he was much more in touch with nature than a lot of farmers and that's why the farm is a very lovely place really because you know, he didn't want to chop all the trees down and he didn't want to plough all the meadows up and so I've always had that slight leaning towards the land and the sort of natural side of it a little bit. So I've got a very strong connection to the land and I've planted a lot of trees and, you know, my life in some ways has been sort of sculpting the land, you know, I'm not trying to be clever and say it's any better than it was but it's still, environmentally it's pretty good (Farmer 16)

He believes the farm, the land and the landscape leave an indelible mark on individuals who have grown up on a farm. Even though his son and daughter did not go on to be farmers, he described how both have pictures of the farmland on their walls. Speaking of his daughter he describes how,

> I don't think she would necessarily know how to farm, but the love of the land is there, and going to see her at university on her bedside table is the view from her bedroom window so, even then, it's in there and she can't escape it really (Farmer 16)

For Farmer 16, connection epitomises rural goodness. His is a nostalgic tendency lending an element of personification to the farm and the farmhouse as if they, in being an active farm, are imbued with their own intrinsic meaning, without which they have 'no reason to be'.

> It breaks my heart when I go to different farms […] where you walk into some farmhouse that's been a farmhouse for at least a thousand years and probably longer and now it belongs to a barrister or somebody who's got no connection to the land at all and the farm house is now completely detached from the farm and although they're lavishing money on it and turning it into a lovely place. It's not gonna have lambs in the AGA with hypothermia, it's not gonna have farm discussions around the kitchen table and somehow it's lost its reason to be. And I find that quite a tragedy (Farmer 16)

7.2.3 Farm Workers' Land Connection

The idea of spreading one's ashes as a symbol of one's connection to the land emerged again, but from a former farm worker.

> You had to be content with it then, if you're connected to it […] I'd have my ashes scattered down at [X] hill, yes, that's how tied I am to [X farmland] […] [You'd have your ashes scattered there?] That's my intention (Farm Worker 16)

When asked if they felt connected to the land they worked, most farm workers affirmed that they were but were unable to expand on how they felt connected. Other responses pointed to the ambiguity of the term 'land' and how this is understood. Land can be seen as simply the fields worked, but Farm Worker 11 associated land more widely with the landscape.

> I like hills and greenery anyway. Like cycling over Dartmoor this morning, I thought this is beautiful. I felt a connection to that. I have a, yeah..[So your connection's a bit broader than just one place?] Yeah, I'd say so, yeah (Farm Worker 11)

Some described the connection as arising from a place-history; a connection arising from growing up and in an area and interacting with other actors on and around the land.

> [How do you feel about the land you work on? Would you say you feel connected to it in any way? The land, the farm…?] I grew up over the years being chased by the farmer when I was a rebel eight year old. You know, there is a massive connection to it [To all of it?] Yeah. To, not just to the land that I look after now, but also the land that the other farmers have. You know, I have quite a good knowledge of the area so..(Farm Worker 15)

> I've been round it all me life. It's just, just, a big part of me that I would miss if I moved away sort of thing (Farm Worker 9)

> [How would you say you feel about the land that you work on? Do you feel connected to the land in any way?] Again, probably more so at mum and dad's than here. Like even the land here will have created memories for me now, that you think 'ah, this is where that happened' or yeah (Farm Worker 3)

Other farm workers also perceived the word connection in terms of their role as a steward of the land.

> [Would you say you feel connected to the land, the landscape?] Yeah. I feel lucky that I've been chosen to look after this bit. You know, this is quite a good bit compared to some and I'm thinking well, it could've been a lot worse, so I consider myself very lucky (Farm Worker 17)

> Yeah, very much so […] you try and do the best for it, basically (Farm Worker 2)

Farm Worker 5, who had only been working for his employer for a short time expressed the experience of getting to know the land and develop a connection as 'learning' it.

> I'm learning it well (Farm Worker 5)

Cooke and Lane (2015) posit the importance of experiential learning, recognising how non-human agency (in this case, of the land) plays a central role in developing either a passive or active approach to land management, or a sense of stewardship. Farm Worker 5's simple comment is loaded with meaning, substantiating the premise that in farming, 'learning continues through a continuous cycle of action and reflection' (ibid: 45)

Farm Worker 8, a respondent whose occupational background had, prior to this job, always been outside of farming, distinguishes between his perspective towards the land and his employer's.

> I love the environment. But, yeah, [X] the farmer would love his fields, because they're growing his grass to produce his crop. Whereas I love the hedges and the bushes and the trees because I look at it from a different angle because of my townie existence (Farm Worker 8)

Others, such as Farm Worker 12, appeared to find the word 'connection' confusing.

> [What's your relationship with the farm and the land? Do you feel connected to it?] Yeah, I guess, you have pride in what you do. And that's the main thing. Like, there's no point in doing what we do, if you don't have pride in what you do [But you could do that somewhere else] Yeah, I don't know, I guess there is a connection because we've always lived here, and you know, we've all had like a really good life here. And that's why, I suppose, you know it's been like, this home has been a loved home and nothing really bad happened (Farm Worker 12)

Comments around stewardship and caring feed into the responsibility narrative that was discussed in chapter four. Discussions of the land and the various respondent's connection to and care of the land echo Barry and Smith's (2008) statement that 'the land and landscape can and ought to be viewed not only in terms of our economic, technological or productive relations and capacities, but also in terms of identity, history, memory and culture' (ibid: 568). These perceptions are important because, as Barry and Smith point out, 'more specific and particularistic appeals to the protection of

'the land' are not incompatible with more common Green non-particularistic appeals to the protection of 'the Earth' or 'the environment' (ibid: 571). Farmers, farm workers and contractors all articulated their role as stewards of the land on some level.

Perhaps unexpectedly, contractors also think longer term. Not in terms of passing on to the family in the same sense as a farmer might, but were extremely passionate about looking after the land. At the same time, many could identify 'bad contracting' of contractors whose quality of work would have been judged as bad for the farmer, the soil and the environment. Their long-term agenda, mirroring that belonging to many of the farmers interviewed, is likely to come partly from the desire for business longevity, something that farm workers who possess lower overall business responsibility (not work task responsibility) might be less concerned by.

A sense of connection to and responsibility for the land suggest a move from being 'conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it' (Leopold 1966: 220). The ethic of care appears to be present in the majority of the respondents, yet constraints, usually economic, often prevent this ethic from fully manifesting itself. Regardless of the depth of knowledge about efficient land and soil management, an instinct exists which recognises the need to look after the land, propelled by multiple motivators. Hayes-Conroy refreshes this ethic of care in Leopold's footsteps, regarding the ethical as 'an innovative […] way to think about the idea of creating a community upheld localism that is dedicated to the care of people, land, and community' (2007: 67).

7.2.4 The Role of Nature-Connectedness

Although a number of farm labour contributors agreed that they felt a connection to the land, the landscape or the wider environment, some were unable to articulate further their expression of this connection. However, on being asked the question, 'what is the best thing about farming?' a large number responded in a way that referred to a connection with nature. I propose that some of these responses are synonymous with connecting to the land, the landscape or the local environment.

> I don't know whether it's because you're closer to nature or you're working outdoors, I'm not sure (Contractor 4)

> My father gave me a love of the land, of animals and things of that nature, and without being too [cliched], you're very close to nature. So you see everything that's going along (Farmer 17)

> Working outdoors, wildlife (Farm Worker 16)

> Six o clock in the morning and there's dew on the ground and the sun's coming up and there's, just the noise of the birds, and that is magical and.. and it doesn't go away. It doesn't matter how many years you go out there in the morning, those smells and that, it's just amazing. Amazing! (Farmer 13)

> Out in the fresh air in the countryside (Farmer 15)

The aesthetics of one's surroundings as sought by an office worker for example, where they might personalise their workspace or where décor/desk placement becomes important, is substituted for all types of farm worker with the land and the natural environment further afield, views that are only partially managed by the farm labour contributor.

> When I worked in Scotland, you'd stepped out of the parlour at an absolutely stunning view down over Lewis Bay and across to the Mull of Galloway, erm, that was just amazing. And then from the back of that collecting yard, when I worked in Ireland, I had views of a couple of mountains, mountain chains and stuff like that so, like there's been, there's sort of been bits and pieces on each farm that's been real, like those are the great things I remember (Farm Worker 1)

Farm Worker 8 originates from a big city and moved into a rural location several years ago. He had experienced isolation in other jobs where he'd worked alone and had actively left jobs due to that sense of isolation. However, although he largely worked alone in his job as a farm worker, it was not a problem.

> I left that job by myself in a car and went back and worked with people. And stayed working with people. So, I do find it strange now that I'm so happy to work by myself. And it makes me wonder if it's just because of the environment I'm working in is really nice that I'm really enjoying it. Whereas if someone put me in a rubbish farm somewhere and I was working by myself, I'd get bored with it. But we're in a beautiful landscape and there's stuff to look at and, you know, that keeps you entertained (Farm Worker 8)

Again, the term land revealed itself as an ambiguous reference amongst the FLCs, being understood as the farm land, the landscape or 'nature'. This question sought to reveal these ambiguities and mixture of understandings. The angle of most answers is unsurprising and numerous authors have discovered the same pattern amongst farmers and farm workers in both the UK and elsewhere (Newby 1977), (Wuthnow 2015), in that the farm labour contributor will often state that one of the best aspects of

their role is in being outside, being part of the landscape, and feeling closer to nature. However, this response has, in the past, been acknowledged as a fact in itself and led to little or no further analysis. 32% of farm workers probed during Newby's research (1977) regarding their most valued aspect of farm work stated either 'working outdoors' or 'satisfaction from seeing crops and animals grow' (ibid: 291) yet these responses were bypassed due to Newby's perception of these responses being 'of a somewhat nebulous kind' (ibid: 290). The connection between this satisfaction factor and the farm labour contributor requires further examination in the research arena, especially if a significant labour crisis does reveal itself. Recent literature has opened up numerous analyses into what is generally termed as 'nature-connectedness'. Capaldi et al (2014) conclude that 'the relationship between nature connectedness and happiness appears to be positive and significant. In general, individuals who are more connected to nature tend to be happier' (ibid: 10). From an ergonomics perspective, Richardson et al (2016) emphasise the benefits of 'bringing nature into the workplace' (ibid: 1) as a means to address various health issues, such as stress. Yet little attention has been paid to those for whom nature is the workplace. Wellbeing and working outdoors in previous analyses of farm labour has usually been negatively associated, due to physical and mental stress, or examined in terms of its physical health benefits, 'they were generally fitter and had more stamina than people in office jobs' (Parry 2005: 42).

7.3 'Nothing Should go Off the Farm Unless it Walks Off' – The Farm Labour Contributor and Environmental Responsibility

In addition to the identification of positive correlations between nature and well-being, further research has sought to identify any emerging patterns between nature-connectedness and pro-environmental behaviour. One such study examined the linkage between farmers' connection to nature and environmental behaviour. Gosling and Williams (2010) discovered a modest positive correlation between nature connectedness and how farmers manage native vegetation on their holdings. They suggest 'farmers who feel a sense of kinship with nature may be more motivated to care for wildlife by protecting areas of native bush on their farm' (ibid: 302). Interestingly, links between connectedness to nature and human welfare were found lacking, whereas place attachment 'displayed modest correlations with both environmental concern and concern for human welfare' (ibid: 302). Berry (1991) states that motivation to care for the land is most likely to come from a 'mutuality of belonging' (ibid: 390), whereby a sense exists that the individual belongs to the land as much as the land belongs to the individual.

Discussions around emotional attachment and care of the land led to discussions about pro-environmental behaviour and responsibility, what will be referred to here as ‘passive care’ or ‘active care’.

Contractors proved particularly vocal about how responsibility should be ascribed to everybody who works the land.

> First thing is don’t do so much spraying. I think, if we farming, like up country where they do a lot of corn and that, they spray and spray and spray. I don’t think really there’s any need to spray so much. Alright, they may have to spray a bit, yeah, But I think they spray a lot more than is needed (Contractor 2)

Contractors in Devon referred to contractors and farmers elsewhere in the country more frequently during the interviews than the other two cohorts. Up country refers to farming landscapes such as East Anglia and Lincolnshire where holdings tend to be larger and farmed more intensively.

Contractor 5, when asked about whether he felt responsibility towards the local environment, again interpreted the term inclusively. Environment didn’t just mean soil, nature or water, but encapsulated aspects that affect a multitude of agents, such as water, the community, and other road users.

> Well, mud on the road and that sort of thing. I don’t like seeing mud on the road. If there is mud on the road I’ll tidy it up, typically. You don’t want run off into streams. A) that’s dangerous and if the farmer or the contractors, you’re losing your worth, watching it wash away. Yeah, and safety on the roads. No point crashing around the roads with dangerous kit (Contractor 5)

Farm workers tended to refer to their own environmental responsibility in a passive way, in terms of general shoulds and should nots, rather than in terms of their own actions or work role.

> I don’t think you should spread slurry in a water course and things like that. Local environment, yeah, give or take the general environment as well. Yes, a general connection to the earth (Farm Worker 11)

> [Would you say you feel any responsibility towards the local environment?] Yes. I mean there’s a fairly nice river that flows through the farm so, it would be nice to try and make sure that at the upstream end of the farm, the water quality is pretty similar to the downstream end of the farm. Um, and yeah, that it stays a generally nice environment. [And do you engage in pro-environmental activities

> here to ensure that that's the case?] Not sure about engaging. It's just being aware of what we're doing and any potential problems that might happen, and trying to avoid or mitigate what could be disastrous I suppose (Farm Worker 1)

Another farm worker approached the question conceptually but as care as action rather than avoidance of behaviours.

> Always try and look, try and do what you can, and just try and improve and make better where you can (Farm Worker 17)

Responsibility was referred to both conceptually, as above, and also as 'active care'. For example, Contractor 6 states that he actively promotes farming methods he perceives as being friendly towards the environment.

> I don't like to see soil running down the rivers. That's one thing. And I don't like to see run-off. You know, that's another thing, they all say farmers don't worry, but if you've got run off, you'm losing, well it's your Ps, Ks and Nitrogen and everything going down the river [If you see somebody who you think isn't farming very well environmentally, do you ever say anything?] I have said, yeah, you wanna try a sub-soiler[14]. And I've even been in and done an acre of sub-soiling for nothing just to prove to 'em what it do's (Contractor 6)

> I don't know how much of farming you understand, but if I go to plough a field, because of erosion, when you work, soil always works down the hill so when you plough a field generally you try and turn the soil back up the hill again. And I always like to do that, because I just think that soil is such a precious commodity, in my career if I work on a farm or work on the land for forty or fifty years, I'd like to think that in the next fifty years, somebody will come along and go, oh, they'll do the same, so over the next several hundred years you are safeguarding the soil for the next generation but I'm not sure everybody thinks like that. But it is, and that's because, you know, I have worked, well one farm in particular I go on, when I left school I worked for the farmer and they used to share gear a bit so I worked there right from school really and I still do now in me own right, and I just feel a duty to almost leave it as I started really. And because, you know, having uncles and grandads and that always being in, well me uncles used to plough with a horse, and I just think, well they used to struggle to use best practice and we've got much better equipment, much better working conditions that are much easier. We should do the same really and not

[14] Sub-soiling refers to a method of tillage where overly compacted soil is broken up to encourage growth in crops and to prevent too much run-off.

> just rape and pillage the countryside as it were really. But there is people out there, I don't know whether they fully understand that or just said it to be awkward I don't know. But I don't like things not being done properly (Contractor 4)

One farm worker was vague about their understanding of environmental responsibility. But again, saw it in terms of what should not be done, rather than what should.

> Yeah, I think we do, like, you know. The solar panels have just gone down across the road and they're nothing to do with us, but that's like, I don't know, they're nothing to do with us, but that's like, it sort of ruins the environment, well it doesn't ruin the environment because it's doing good to the environment, but it's like ruining the landscape. Yeah, I guess we do, and we recycle all our farm plastics and everything. And we have a wood chip burner which heats all the water and everything so, we do our bit [Do you do any agri-environment schemes, like HLS or anything like that?] No, we do all the, what's it called, like the hedges, I can't remember what it's called, but we do all that. Like, we put in ponds and stuff (Farm Worker 12)

This vagueness might come from the fact that their role is less managerial and therefore actions stem from following instructions rather than being engaged with the entire process from the top-down. Although Farm Worker 15 tends to manage the day to day aspects of the farm he works on, he is unsure about his affiliation to the environment. Large scale decisions are still made off-farm by the land owner, disempowering Farm Worker 15 from important decision-making processes regarding the farm in its entirety.

> [In terms of local environment, do you feel responsibility towards that?] I think so [Do you engage in any pro-environmental activities?] I think so (Farm Worker 15)

However, a further response from him suggests ambiguity in the terminology of environmental responsibility. More specific questioning led to a more emotionally articulate response.

> [Do you engage in any agri-environment schemes?] The farm is part of a HLS scheme, they call it. Yeah, we've been doing that for about six, five, six year [And how do you feel about that?] I feel quite good about that. We, um, have restored about 25 acres of our land, which was disused, basically a bramble-covered mess. But we've thinned it out, we've cleaned it all up, we've put sheep

> in there, cows in there. We've grazed it down, we've planted wildflower meadows in it now. And, I think it looks really nice. I'm quite glad to see it come back to use. From an area that was just so untidy and horrible, to an area now when you actually see that it can be cleaned up, done, and animals can still use it and benefit the farm, and it's also making it a lot better for other animals as well. I quite like it (Farm Worker 15)

Although the decision to be part of the HLS scheme was not made by him, he still achieves a sense of well-being from executing the scheme and witnessing the results.

Causal factors for the sense of responsibility vary. The wife of Contractor 2 believes that people working the land feel responsible towards it due to obligation.

> [Do you feel any responsibility towards the local environment?] Well, yeah you do, because you've gotta do, supposed to be doing you NVZs[15] and all that aren't you, and things like that [What's that? What's NVZs?] To do with when you spread the muck on the fields (Contractor 2's wife)

Contractor 8 voices his aversion to chemicals but was ambiguous as to where this aversion came from. There might be some environmental responsibility attached to his reasoning, although he cites health and safety reasons for himself and his staff, as well as no staff members being interested in spraying work.

> I don't do spraying [Why not?] I don't like chemicals [Is that why?] Not particularly no. We've never actually had a guy who's shown any interest. I'm not a big lover of chemicals. We've never actually had a guy who's shown a big enough interest in it. I ought to. It's one thing I've been asked quite a few times, like, why don't you get a sprayer. But I just say, well cos I haven't got one, there's enough other people doing it. But, um, yeah, we've never had enough interest in a bloke and I'm not a big lover of chemicals really (Contractor 8)

Some farm labour contributors are dismissive of governmental schemes which promote environmentally-friendly methods.

> They'll do all these environmental schemes and everything but that ain't really helping farming. They're trying to help the environment but farmers do that anyway (Contractor 6)

> That's a jolly good improvement, the flail hedge-trimmer. Course, there's a lot of people don't like it [Why not?] These animal conservationists […] You can't

[15] Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – designated areas considered at risk from nitrate pollution.

> start til the end of August? Just because of the bird's nests. Bloody ridiculous, ain't it […] One thing I'll tell you straight to you mind. I don't know what you thought about it. Wildlife is more important than we human beings, the way them carrying on today (Contractor 1)

> [Do you engage in any agri-environment schemes?] We did a little bit on the entry-level scheme and then we've let that lapse because we didn't see any real benefit from that (Farm Worker 17)

Whilst others voiced their being favour of such schemes.

> I think what the government's doing at the moment is quite good to be honest, like the set asides and stuff like that. Yes, tis not easy for farmers all the time but the amount of wildlife back in the countryside has improved. Even I see that just going round [You do?] Yeah (Contractor 7)

Farm workers who are also family members or have a supervisory position, contractors, and farmers, all expressed greater levels of agency in their feelings of responsibility towards the environment. Whilst general farm workers or workers who had expressed unsatisfactory relationships with their employers appeared less assertive regarding their feelings around this subject.

Key to these qualitative findings around the respondent's sense of responsibility towards their surroundings is that even if a connectedness to nature or attachment to place is present in the attitude of the interviewee, constraints are likely to prevent a desired behaviour that might otherwise naturally result from these emotional attachments. Gosling and Williams (2010) recognise that factors of constraint for the farmer in their engagement in pro-environmental behaviours might include income, time and/or equipment.

7.4 Sustainable Intensification – Understandings and Attitudes

The importance of the role of the land, the environment and the landscape (all three are outlined here as often little distinction was made between them) as network actors in the lifescape of the farm labour contributor led easily into the question of sustainable intensification. Having articulated the more visceral connections that this blurred entity incited in them, they were then asked the question, 'what does the term sustainable intensification mean to you?'

Responses revealed that most farmers tended to respond to the term in a particularistic manner, meaning that they viewed it in terms of their own farming practices on their

own farm. Whilst farm workers and contractors mainly responded in a universalistic way, regarding it instead as it is applied in a more general sense to national or global farming practices. For contractors in particular this is unsurprising considering their affiliation is with multiple holdings rather than just one or just their own. Table 7.2 illustrates the varying responses to the term.

Table 7.2

Particularistic and universalistic understandings of sustainable intensification

Particularistic	**Universalistic**
I mean *we'd* like to think *we're* more involved in sustainable extensification […] from *our point of view* what it means for us is about having the ultimate number of animals that this piece of ground can support productively without bringing in external imports, really […] we're moving one of the herds across the road right now and one of the issues is we're dumping them onto arable land that has basically had no organic matter in it, it's been growing crops for years and years and years and we're trying to get the organic matter back in because it's not sustainable, making sure that we're thinking about the five year rather than a one year plan (Farmer 1)	I guess that means if you're farming intensively how you gonna sustain it over the next hundreds of years (Contractor 4)
	It means more production but in a safe and non-environmentally unfriendly way (Contractor 5)
	Is it like intensive farming but done on a sustainable scale? (Contractor 7's wife)
	I don't know but I'd guess we are using up more resources than we what's left, you know, we probably need two planet's worth of resources. We can't sort of up and, oh, just nip across the universe and pitch up tent here. That ain't gonna happen is it (Contractor 8)
Yes. It means what *we're* doing really […] we're farming organically, we're trying to care for the land, the soil and ourselves, and if we can do that, it's sustainable. And if my business is making a profit and I can invest that back into the farm, that's my definition of sustainable […] It's not land or people or you know global or anything else. We buy very very little in, you know, our concentrate use is about 200 kilos a cow whereas, you know a conventional farmer it may be two tonne. […]And it is, yes, it's intensive because we're still producing more milk than we did when we fed 3 tonnes of cake and grew maize and sprayed and fertilised and everything else. So I think, yeah, you can have intensive and sustainable (Farmer 10)	Erm. Getting more out of the farm without breaking things (Farm Worker 1)
	I don't know it's kind of like some bullshit phrase people use to sell stuff. Sell more technology, sell more fertiliser (Farm worker 11)
	It's about how far and how hard you can push without damaging the environment around you (Farm Worker 15)
	Well, the two don't go to together do they really? You can't intensify and sustain at the time, not really. They said the year of cheap food was over. But it isn't, it's come back again hasn't it. Um, in 2010 we were all told to go away and produce more food because

I'm on a farm which is ideal for wildlife. Across the other side of the road, if you went to Silverton, it's ideal for growing crops. So *I* should be concentrating on *my* wildlife. De-farming to a certain extent. And the person on the very good ground should be producing as much as he possibly can from that ground (Farmer 17)	everybody was gonna starve by 2030. Farmers have gone forth and made more, and shot themselves in the foot by intensive sustainability. So yeah, we'd be better to be extensive. That would be more sustainable in the long term (Farm Worker 17)
Sustainable intensification is, actually *we* work with our farms and *we* get as much out of our land and our farms without having to bring it thousands of miles from the rest of the world. And *we're* sustainable, now we use grass mixes with clover so we don't need that much nitrogen on the grassland […] Work with nature, rather than against it (Farmer 19)	Wow! Erm, intensification means you're putting more and more and more into it, but obviously, it needs to be sustainable to do it, so erm…. (Farm Worker 2)
[So, it's basically like, trying to produce as much food as possible with as little impact on the environment as possible] Yeah, I'd have said that's probably what *we're* doing here (Farmer 2)	Oh, I used to do a lot of this at uni! Taking me back! So yeah, intensifying, as in producing as much as we can from what we've got without completely trashing the environment, I guess (Farm Worker 3)
So, looking at, you know, maximising *our* dry matter per hectare type thing, and looking at the agri net, that sort of thing, managing that side. Or it could just be composition of milk or whatever *we* were doing (Farmer 20)	Well, by the sounds of things, its maximising what you're getting off the ground but being sustainable with it (Farm Worker 5)
It conjures up all sorts of images, doesn't it? […] for it to be sustainable, there's going to be a variety of farming systems in the country. There's gonna be your organic, there's gonna be your indoor poultry and dairy, and like we're doing with grazing cows outside and stuff. Producing milk off grass as cheap as we can. But intensification, it's just sort of, like we've sort of said before, for us, if it's first things first, to be sustainable, it's got to be financially sustainable, cos nothing, there's no point having a system that's environmentally sustainable and all the other buzz words, if it doesn't stack up, because it's not gonna carry on. So that's	Ok. So, sustainable and intensification are almost a contradiction in terms, I think. Um, sustainable farming, you're farming in the best of your ability to produce a crop within an environmentally friendly way. Intensification, its what we do isn't it? (Farmer 13) Well, I assume it just means getting more from it but in a sustainable manner. (Farmer 14) Sustainable intensification. Do the two go together? I don't know. Can it be sustainable and intensive? Probably can. Sustainable and non-intensive would, I think go hand in hand, but sustainable and intensive…(Farmer 15) Well, it's a lovely soundbyte, isn't it! […] it's kind of like the dilemma for farming at the moment. It's kind of like the dilemma, how do we do, how do we feed the world whilst looking after the countryside, while looking after the ground and the soil and all those things, and produce more food for a growing population. (Farmer Who?)

gotta be first really […] So we, if you've got the soils working properly, like what we sort of try to do and grow as much as you can on-farm here, like *we* are today, not sort of moving stuff around, cos moving stuff around is what people think of as intensive but is it sustainable? That's where the grey area sort of comes into it. (Farmer 8)	Um, getting bigger. We've gotta get bigger and more efficient. That's the way I see that. Say it again, sustainable…? […] Yeah, making the most of the resources we've got available to us. And expanding, you know, to spread our costs. Not, intensification wouldn't be more pesticides, more, you know, changing the systems, cos we can't plough our land up, we'll just hit granite. So it's not gonna happen (Farmer 6)

Farmers were much more likely to be able to outline the meaning of sustainable intensification, whilst amongst both farm workers and contractors fifty per cent were able to successfully describe it's meaning and fifty per cent could not (Figure 7.6).

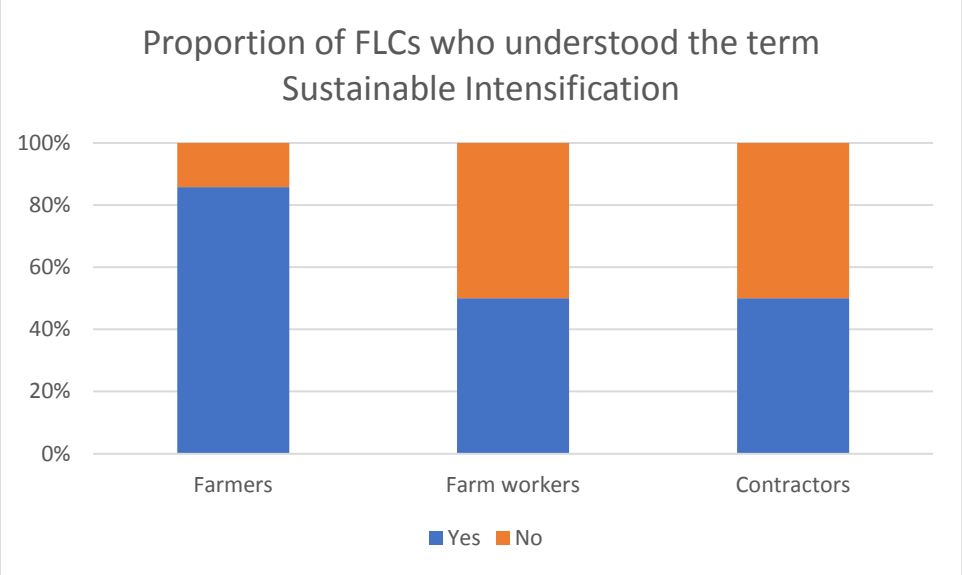

Figure 7.6. Proportion of FLCs who understood the term sustainable intensification

Age seemed to play little role in how well any individual understood the term but greater levels of education were positively linked to how well people understood the term (Figure 7.7).

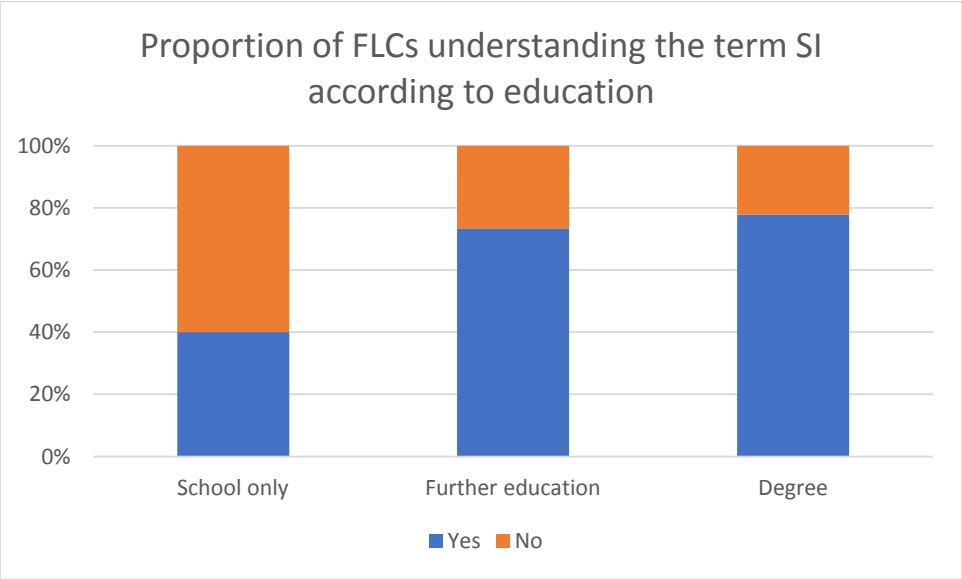

Figure 7.7. Proportion of FLCs who understood the term SI according to education

Primarily, this demonstrates that farmers are more likely to be educated about matters such as sustainable intensification or be introduced to the term via networks external to normal education routes. Neither age nor education appeared to play any significant role with regards to their understanding. However, this knowledge appears not to trickle down effectively to farm workers or on to contractors where formal education does appear to play more of a role in whether they can articulate the meaning of SI. The significance of this might not only come down to education.

A report examining farmers' engagement activities regarding the concept of sustainable intensification revealed 'relatively high levels of use and interest in adopting/extending use across all SI activities, with the exception of the "staff training for sustainability" intervention' (Morris et al 2017: 4). This response is partly explained by low levels of staff potentially being employed by the respondents, as well as the high cost of training. All other interventions, such as reseeding pasture for improved nutrient value, optimising marginal land for ecosystem services or improving animal nutrition, were reported as being carried out at higher levels, despite several signifying greater incurred costs. This suggests that other factors might be at play with regards to farmer attitudes to staff training, a feature of their behaviour which research might lend itself well to in the future.

Farmer 20 remonstrated the very use of the term 'sustainable intensification', dismissing it as 'jargon'. Farm worker 11 referred to it as a 'bullshit phrase people use to sell stuff', whilst farmer 12 put it more elegantly as 'fancy terminology' and 'jargon', stating they were 'a little bit suspicious of the words *they* use'. It is assumed that *they* refers to the scientific or research and development community and this is further

evidence of the ambivalence some members of the farming world throw in the direction of scientific figures.

The term sustainable intensification is met with some suspicion, as if somehow separate from the farming community. However, it is important to point out that not understanding the term does not mean that participants did not understand the concept and practices. When the meaning of sustainable intensification was explained in its simplest terms, almost every participant who had been asked the first question was able to articulate an opinion regarding the objective of sustainable intensification, many of whom showed a confidence and deeper knowledge than first suggested.

As to the possibility of achieving SI, a variety of responses were received but in total respondents were largely optimistic, apart from nine respondents who were unsure, and eight respondents who did not believe that it was possible as an agenda, of these eight, only one was a farm worker.

> I think environmentally we will continue to pay the price for farming a little bit. Unless people pay more for their food and that doesn't happen, does it? (Farmer 16)

> I don't think it probably is, not really. If somebody's intensive then obviously they're pushing everything as hard as they can go. And if they're pushing everything as hard as they can go, they're putting on a lot of fertiliser, a lot of chemicals, they're pushing their lifestock to the limit (Farmer 15)

> Well, the two don't go to together do they really? You can't intensify and sustain at the time, not really. They said the era of cheap food was over. But it isn't, it's come back again hasn't it. Um, in 2010 we were all told to go away and produce more food because everybody was gonna starve by 2030. Farmers have gone forth and made more, and shot themselves in the foot by intensive sustainability. So yeah, we'd be better to be extensive. That would be more sustainable in the long term (Farm Worker 17)

> No Um, the farmers and the soil and the crops, I mean there's not as many of them around now but years ago when we used to work on mixed farms, where they would keep cattle, spread dung, plough a field, rotate….their soil would be living with worms and that. But you go on farms now where it's arable crop, arable crop, arable crop…they can still produce a crop but they throw more and more inputs at it and it's not sustainable because eventually they reach that point where, you know, now they're seeing a lot of crops aren't economic to grow but partly because the soil's so depleted (Contractor 4)

All those who said that achieving sustainable intensification not possible were over the age of 50.

Farmer 7 believes that the concept is achievable and that farmers are capable or implementing the necessary measures, but he recognises that as an actor on his/her own, this is not enough.

> There's lots of things we need to sort out in agriculture […] Can the country produce more food? Can farmers produce more food? Undoubtedly. Can they produce it without ruining the environment? Undoubtedly. Will they? That is the problem. Will they? Can they? Should they? Will the government let them do it? Will they be paid enough? Will they be respected enough? Is the infrastructure in place? Probably not. Is the research in place? Probably. I believe all that side of it's all right. But it's not getting down to the farmers. There's no knowledge transfer. The knowledge transfer in this country is rubbish (Farmer 7)

Another farmer regarded the implementation of sustainable intensification techniques as an inevitability.

> We won't have any choice. It won't be a matter of whether we want to. If it came to the crunch where we had a world food crisis, you know, whether we were a member of Europe or not, you know, France would ringfence their food supply, Germany would. And we as an island would have to have what's available to us (Farmer 19)

While farmer 10 disregarded the Loos et al (2014) definition of sustainable intensification, preferring instead to encapsulate everything in his lifescape affected by his decision-making processes as requiring sustainability.

> Yes. It means what we're doing really. I think to, we're farming organically, we're trying to care for the land, the soil and ourselves, and if we can do that, it's sustainable. And if my business is making a profit and I can invest that back into the farm, that's my definition of sustainable. Obviously we've been farming organically for ten years, we're actually milking more cows now than we did conventionally. We're making a living for me and my family and we're creating sustainability. I mean that's what sustainability is. It's not land or people or you know global or anything else. You know, every year I lay some hedges which gives me enough firewood to keep the house warm. You know, that's my view of sustainability. We buy very very little in, you know, our concentrate use is about 200kilos a cow whereas, you know a conventional farmer it may be two tonne. Last year we bought very very little because we managed to crimp grain

> rather than buying grain, and we bought ten tonnes of grain and 16 tonnes of soil. All the rest of it was off the farm. That's what sustainable is. And it is, yes, it's intensive because we're still producing more milk than we did when we fed 3 tonnes of cake and grew maize and sprayed and fertilised and everything else. So I think, yeah, you can have intensive and sustainable (Farmer 10

Farm Workers were also emphatic about the trajectory of the sustainable intensification concept.

> Oh yeah, definitely. Like look at the New Zealand grazing systems. You're getting however many times more grass and field value and everything off the ground, but with, you're actually doing the ground better for it, than covering the ground in chemicals and cutting it for silage once a year (Farm Worker 5)

Sustainable intensification is a relatively new construct, one that might be described as a universal knowledge distributed from research and development epicentres, despite the practice having existed in informal terms for generations. If sustainable intensification represents the future for farming in the South West, and by default ensures the sustainability of both the industry and the jobs provided by it, then this kind of knowledge should be made accessible to all types of farm labour contributors. Chapter seven demonstrated how an active exchange of knowledge is occurring between farmers, farm workers and contractors, and each can now act as an advisor to the other. As frontline workers carrying out tasks for busy employers, not only will inclusion in this practice improve the work situation for each type of worker, but techniques in sustainability might be more likely to be carried out with precision, skill and capability that can only occur through the provision of opportunity.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter realises the second aim of the thesis, identifying how agricultural labour contributors relate to their immediate communities, and recognises actants beyond simply the human as forming part of these communities.

These results support the findings of Raymond et al (2010) who propose a five-dimensional model of place attachment, composed of place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, family bonding and friend bonding. Their study was limited to rural landholders and their relationship with their natural resource management region but similar narratives arose within the lifescapes of farm workers and contractors in this study. This links the current chapter with the preceding chapter where friendship and kinship relationships formed bonds with myriad strands stemming from them pertaining to support, information exchange, knowledge and skills. This

chapter proposes that the farm labour contributor be examined according to the five-dimensional model where no single element can be seen to be more important than the other in the playing out of behaviours relating to other actors within their network, including the community, the land and the surrounding environment.

The concept of nature-connectedness as a precursor to the wellbeing and happiness of the farm labour contributor has also been discussed. According to Coulthard (2012), eudaimonic wellbeing describes a concept 'which entails more than income, but the living of, and flourishing in, a life that is valued and deemed worthwhile' (ibid: 358).

And finally, further exploration of attitudes, understandings and perceptions of the term 'sustainable intensification' revealed that participants were not always quick to associate the term with it's associated practices, and that an understanding of the term was linked to levels of education. Each cohort related to the concept differently, with farmers viewing the agenda from a more personal or business-oriented locus, whilst farm workers and contractors perceived it in more general terms, further deepening understandings of the interrelatedness of each cohort with the farmscape and landscape they work.

Chapter Eight: Community Connection and Socio-diversity

> '*Community, then, is an indispensable term in any discussion of the connection between people and land'* (Berry 2003: 202-203)

8.0 Introduction

O'Hara (1995) describes socio-diversity as 'the diverse ways of social and economic arrangements by which peoples have organised their societies, particularly the underlying assumptions, goals, values and social behaviours guiding these economic arrangements and processes' (ibid: 31). As a part of the current rural community, the farming community has retracted in size significantly, yet somewhat quietly, even since Newby's day, so the role of the community in the lifescape of the FLC requires fresh examination, because according to O'Hara, 'the loss of socio-diversity has consequences' (ibid: 32). This chapter provides a fresh analysis of the interplay between local communities and those working the land, from the examination of informal labour exchange, to deeper understandings regarding how the farm labour contributor perceives themselves in relation to the local, non-farming community, and how transitions in infrastructure and machinery have impacted on identity formation and well-being.

In his examination of landscape hermeneutics and ethics of place, Drenthen (2011) discusses the idea of legible and illegible landscapes, and suggests 'landscapes with a high horizontal legibility tend to have complex, multifaceted functional patterns and therefore tell an interesting story, whereas illegible landscapes tend to be monotonous and dull (e.g. the huge monocultures of the agro-industry)' (ibid: 9). However, this homogenised perception of the agricultural landscape overlooks what Riley and Harvey (2007) term the 'heterogeneous agri-cultures' embedded within these landscapes which have played and continue to play an important role in 'the historical geography of farming cultures and the processes of agricultural and landscape change' (ibid: 392). These monoscapes, if interpreted effectively, can also be legible, and through this interpretation, not only can we achieve a 'more contextualised reading of the landscape' (Riley and Harvey 2007: 406) but also recognise 'how changing landscapes and practices are inextricably entwined with changing technological, economic and social conditions, which have fostered shifting attitudes, values and meanings that are far from spatially or temporally static' (ibid: 409).

8.1 Over the Fence – The Neighbour in the Network

The loss of neighbourliness and frequent interaction with one's neighbours both in and out of the work situation was lamented by a few of the older farmers and farm workers. Farm Worker 7, one of the oldest of the respondents, could remember when neighbouring farms had shared labour. He'd been employed by his farm to perform combining work on farms in the village, before contractors replaced that structure of labour-sharing.

> Sociable thing. Back then it was, yeah. Not so much now. You don't get that so much now, but you did back then […] I used to do a lot of combining at one time. Used to go in and mix with the farmer, you'd go in and you 'ave your meal and that with 'em and go on, they'd give you a good tip when you'd done it. Yeah, it was good (Farm Worker 7)

> When we had a lot of people here working, we would go over, next door neighbours, when they were threshing, we'd go there threshing. So effectively, we were contracting. But in fact, it was, sort of self-help on a group scale, on a local neighbour's scale […] So you know, you came there, and then you went back, so that really, it wasn't charged out, so now, the difference is, its charged out to a third party, rather than, you know, coming over and all sitting down for dinner lunch times, because you sort of repaid people by all sitting down and eating (Farmer 4)

> Just this lane, there used to be four farms down here and I can remember the sort of snow of 1963. It used to be a sort of question that you'd dig out, you'd dig your way out when you have to get milk out, it was all dairy farms to the next farm, which was a mile up the road. And then two of you would then dig through the snow to the next farm and then the three of you, and then four of you, and then by the time you got to the end of the lane, you're all drinking beer and working together (Farmer 16)

The sociability of farming both as a feature of the intrinsic work situation and more especially, as an external communal experience, has been all but lost for the majority of farm labour contributors. Interactions with neighbours in a work dimension were described as few and far between. Historically, social connections developed between neighbouring farms due to the necessity of labour sharing at crucial harvesting periods. As those labour tasks have been replaced by machinery, the structure of social capital in farming communities has been transformed. Sutherland and Burton (2011) approach these changes from the perspective of Bordieu's theory of social capital, attributing

changes in the ability to generate and maintain social capital to 'the high cost of machinery and repairs and the reduced reliance on labour [creating] a disincentive for informal cooperation' (ibid: 250).

There seemed to be a significant split between farms who still look out for their neighbours and those who remain very much singular units. According to Winter and Lobley (2016) small family farms 'provide a network of services to the community for example as contractors or repairers of machinery' (ibid: 38), a fact mirrored in this study whereby farmers on larger holdings proved to be less likely to provide any kind of work for neighbouring farmers or the community. The couple running the largest farm surveyed arrived in the area 25 years previously and so may not have developed relationships of 'durable obligations' built up though many years of successful reciprocity of labour or inexpensive machinery (Sutherland and Burton 2011).

Farmers or managers who demonstrated an active inclination towards helping a neighbouring farmer often did so in one of two ways. The first is under *emergency circumstances*, whereby a neighbour contributes time, labour or machinery in the event of an unexpected occurrence to a friend or neighbour.

> We're very lucky here in that our neighbours are our friends […] I broke my leg, I was lying at the bottom of the stairs, we hadn't got any staff at the time […] I rang up one of my neighbours and said, can you do me a favour, and he said yes of course what is it. And I said I've just fallen down the stairs, I need to go to hospital, can you send your chap round to feed. And he said, yeah no problem. Well, I ended up in hospital and staying in and that sort of thing. He did it for […] probably about a fortnight. I rang up another neighbour who'd just sold his cows. Said the same thing. And he actually milked my cows for six weeks until we got a relief milker (Farmer 10)

> [Do you ever help neighbours, relatives or neighbours who have farms?] Yes, yes, depending on what the need is and what have you. I mean when my uncle […] was poorly before he died, we pitched in and helped him all the time. You know, running his farm for him. I mean, every farmer does that I think (Farm Worker 17)

> There are the old farmers who annoy us […] but at the same time you'd like to hope that those people would be the people who would help you if you needed help. Like, when I was 10, 12, dad was really ill, um, he had cancer and he didn't work for a couple of years. So, then, mum and a couple of the neighbours pretty much ran our farm for the year […] you can think, well they own all this

> land, but actually, when something like that happens you think, we'll actually they have got a heart […] Farming is a community, and the amount of people who would, you know, who came and did a few things for us, probably for nothing, was amazing really (Farm Worker 3)

Informal circumstance provides the other means of labour sharing between farms.

> We do a little bit […] because part of the farm was sold last year and we've been doing some work for the guy that bought it, so we do a bit for him. But yeah, you know, if anyone around needs a hand, you know. We'll occasionally borrow a piece of equipment off a neighbour and vice versa, that sort of stuff (Farmer 14)

> [Do you ever help neighbours out?] From time to time [What sort of thing do you help them with?] Moving silage, straw, that type of thing [And do they help you in return?] To a certain extent [So is any money exchanged?] Sometimes money is exchanged but it's normally go and have a beer afterwards or something of that nature (Farmer 17)

> We would occasionally get a phone call from somebody who's got some pet sheep somewhere that can't lamb them, that will say, can you just come and help us do something. But not on a significant basis at all. It's only on a friendly basis, with a neighbour, yeah (Farmer 13)

Farmer 8 described how his farm and two others often did small jobs for one another, saying that money rarely changed hands between them.

> It sort of works itself out and you sort of get that vibe, but yeah, as it is, we all, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. And we all sat down here before and worked it out and we decided we'd all call it quits really (Farmer 8)

So, farms seem to be split between helping neighbours for free, assisting them for a fee, or not partaking in any form of labour exchange at all. The term neighbourly help also proves ambiguous as most farmers responded to it in terms of local social geography and tangible, physical labour, whereas Farmer 20 viewed it more comprehensively.

> Oh gosh. We do a lot of things within industry. We do a lot of things with discussion groups and hosting events and being part of events and creating bespoke groups to discuss and communicate. That's what you mean, so that does relate to other holdings really (Farmer 20)

The prevalence of contractors in the contemporary agricultural lifescape means that the distinction between farmers who provide a service for a neighbour on a fee-basis under an impression of assisting a neighbour, and formal contracting work, is seemingly somewhat blurred for some of the farm labour contributors.

> I buy cattle for a neighbour. So, you know, he'll trust me to spend, you know a hundred thousand a year of his money. So, other than that, not a lot no (Farmer 19)

> It's paid because it's easier that way, because they pay us, we pay them, and it just keeps things straight. It's like, I don't, it's like, none of us mind lending a machine or giving time, but if you take a tractor, it's costing you probably £15 an hour, £20 an hour to run that machine so, if you go off for a day or two, then it's cost you [A few hundred pounds?] Yeah (Farmer 2)

Overall, labour-sharing between neighbours appears to have been negatively affected by the accruement of expensive machinery or by the reduction in availability of labour, perpetuating the individualistic nature of contemporary farming and therefore exacerbating the independent status of the farmer (Sutherland and Burton 2011). Although this research unveils new patterns whereby none but the largest holdings possess the capital necessary to perform essential tasks on the farm, so 'competition for high-status cultural goods in order to be seen as a good farmer' (ibid: 248) has increasingly been diverted away from the farmer onto the contractor. Further disconnection between farms, especially the smaller family farms, will likely increase financial vulnerability and place the sustainability of small farms at risk due to the lack of an informal buffer provided by neighbours during emergency circumstances. Contractors are, as yet, unable to perform all tasks on every type of farm, especially where the involvement of animals dominates work tasks. Fortunately, members of the agricultural lifescape in the case study region remain optimistic.

> They're a funny old lot farmers. There'll look over their fence and laugh at one another's crops and whatever, but when the chips are down they'll bale each other out every time (Farm Worker 17)

8.2 The Farm Worker and the Local, Non-Farming Community

Results from the interviews demonstrate a significant divide between individualism and community-mindedness amongst participants. Some farm labour contributors and their families were emphatic about their connection to the local community. However, a number of farm labour contributors actively separated themselves off from the

community, stating that they were neither very interested in what was happening locally nor felt particularly active in or responsible for the community. Such attitudes were demonstrated by some farmers, farm workers, and contractors alike.

Lobley et al (2005) recognised this pattern in their examination of the social impacts of agricultural restructuring, stating that:

> 'Despite being socially embedded in their communities […] the results of the household survey suggest that farmers are less socially active than non-farmers. The reasons for this vary but are associated with a desire to avoid exposure to criticism (of farming/being a farmer), the lack of time associated with excessive working hours and, more straightforwardly, the declining number of main occupation farmers in rural areas' (ibid: vi)

However, for those for whom inactivity was not the case, they tended to be highly active, such as serving on the local parish council, participating in Open Farm Sunday, hosting village celebrations, or belonging to the local church. Farmer 16 has employed a number of different people from within and without the community since taking the farm over from his father. Even though few of these people still carry out work on the holding, established connections appear to continue long after the position of employment has been left.

> It's a sort of symbiotic relationship. But it does mean that you've got depth and it does mean that you've got help if you need help […] my father died two years ago […] In the end he had pneumonia and he kind of, he'd had enough of his treatment so I said look I'd like to get him home to die. And they kind of said, he's a big guy and, you know, he's unconscious now really, and the practicalities are very difficult because how could you get him upstairs if you get him home. And I said, well, you know, how many people do you need? And they said well you need at least four people. And I just said right, just rounded them up, and we had another friend who lived in the woods and, there was enough people living here to be able to meet him and carry him upstairs and for me that was quite nice because it was people, it wasn't somebody you were paying to get in, or strangers, they were people that belonged to the farm. And I think farms need people (Farmer 16)

Many of the younger respondents reported being active members of the Young Farmer's Club, the significance of which will be examined in the following chapter, whilst being less active in their more immediate communities.

Inactivity in the community was occasionally displayed as a forced situation rather than a choice. Several respondents defended their responses by stating that 'there wasn't much on' and that their community participation would increase if opportunities presented themselves. This concept feeds into the idea of 'dead' and 'live' villages as described further below.

A sense of loss

The rural idyll conveys images of a healthy community, tight-knit and always looking out for one another. But numerous factors have created a fracture in this mythological concept, largely but not entirely owing to changes in the infrastructure of villages where the case study farms were based. Berry (2015) believes culpability lies with the transition from occupational communities to disparate communities and the decrease in mutual usefulness, resulting in community relationships where 'people relate to one another increasingly as random particles' (ibid: 54).

Affordability of housing in rural areas was a major factor in the housing location of the farm labour contributor. This meant that the local community of many farm labour contributors was different to the local community of the farm, or farming area where most work was performed (as in the case of the contractor). Housing prices were largely blamed on newcomers.

8.2.1 Changes in infrastructure

Contractor 8 distinguished between villages being 'alive' or 'dead' according to the quality of the infrastructure. He described his village as a 'live village because it's got a school and a pub and a shop and a post office' whereas villages that used to have schools, 'they're all dead now'.

Many respondents of all ages and worker type mourned the closure of shops and pubs in their local villages. Newby had described the local pub as 'one of the most important arenas within which the norms and values of the local social system are reinforced and in which the status of the agricultural worker is evaluated among his peers' (1977: 358).

The prevalence of shops had already begun to decline in the seventies and eighties, according to respondents.

> We got no shops. There used to be about seven or eight shops in the village. Two butchers, two bakers, cobblers, tailors. You could get everything in the village you needed. You didn't have to go out of the village for anything [And when did that start to change?] Seventies, eighties (Farm Worker 16)

> [Village X] used to have a pub, this is that little one you came through here, a pub, village shop, saddlers, iron mongers. There's nothing there now at all (Farm Worker 17)

But the closure of local pubs has tended to occur over a more recent time period. Although where they do still exist, they can still play a role in relationships between various agents in the lifescape of the farm labour contributor.

> Sometimes you get [newcomers] in and they start kicking up a bit of a fuss and…but you usually get around it. You see 'em down the pub, get chatting to 'em, buy 'em a drink, tell 'em what you're about and then, yeah (Contractor 6)

Several farm workers mention how the pub is still the centre of social activities for the farm labour contributors on their farm.

> Every few weeks we just sort of get together and have an evening together locally in a pub, and something to eat and sit and relax (Farm Worker 2)

> After a sheep sale, we'll go to, this sounds bad, but the pub. And we'll talk about what our plans are for next year (Farm Worker 9)

Farm Worker 17, however, mostly works alone and states 'I don't go to the pub every other night, or every week even'.

And Farm Worker 5 attributes his social life in a village apart from his work village to his working part time in the local pub. Although even he states the composition of the village has changed his social dynamic within it.

> I was there the other day when the school bus came back and I didn't know anybody. And I thought, this is weird, I used to know every single person who would get off the bus and walk through the village and, yeah, it just felt strange not knowing a single person on the bus (Farm Worker 5)

So the presence of a pub in either the village local to the place of work or in the home location of the worker contributes overall to their work life but there was little evidence that the pub as a place played any significant role in status allocation of workers. This change in behaviour patterns might not only be ascribed to changes in infrastructure or the presence of newcomers but also lifestyle changes that have been occurring since the 1970s and 1980s. As more women work and have gained a more equal footing in terms of childcare etc, the pub as a symbol of the man's domain has weakened significantly. Equally, health concerns and economic factors might play a role in pub attendance.

> I don't…drinking, like going out, pub, things like that, it don't appeal to me anymore, not now that I'm older I suppose. Back in the day it used to be a part of, you know, let's get paid and let's go to the pub. But once you, well, some people grow up without their kids, but I didn't grow up til I had the kids (Farm Worker 14)

However, most respondents said that visits to the local pub tended to be few and far between, if a pub existed at all. This demonstrates a huge difference to Newby's results, where just over 40% of all respondents visited the pub once a week or more (1977: 344) and thus means significant changes have taken place in terms of how the farm labour contributor perceives themselves within their local community. Interestingly, in discussions around transitions within the community and social lives, very few farmers mentioned the pub at all, and when they did it was to reference a location in the village or to complain about it as a distraction to their workers.

The denuding of rural villages of their pubs means that an essential platform where remnants of the agricultural encapsulated or occupational community could perform for the acquisition of status has disappeared, that place where, according to Newby, 'the individual agricultural worker could accrue to himself a great deal of the esteem and self-respect which was often denied to him in the rest of society' (ibid: 329) no longer exists. Such a transition in social structure might contribute further to both the sense of isolation experienced by so many of the farm labour contributors, as well as removing a stage whereby locals and newcomers might establish more meaningful networks.

Farm workers who commute tended to build relationships in their place of living rather than in the villages local to the farm, but due to hours worked, most reported a minimal social life. Few farm labour contributors interviewed form part of any larger farming associations, apart from the Young Farmer's Club, which proved to be an extremely important part of many farm workers' lives, whether historically or currently, and seven (a mixture of farmers, farm workers and contractors) were members of other organisations such as the National Farmers Union, dairy organisations, coops or advisory boards. Agricultural shows are viewed overall as an amusing diversion rather than a source of social or cultural capital, sometimes attributed to them 'just being geared around the townies' (Farmer 15)

Despite the contraction of informal platforms for the congregation of all members of the agricultural community, farmers revealed that informal contacts still acted as the preferred method of recruitment of new workers, with over fifty five per cent of farmers surveyed electing this method before advertising locally, nationally online (Figure 8.1).

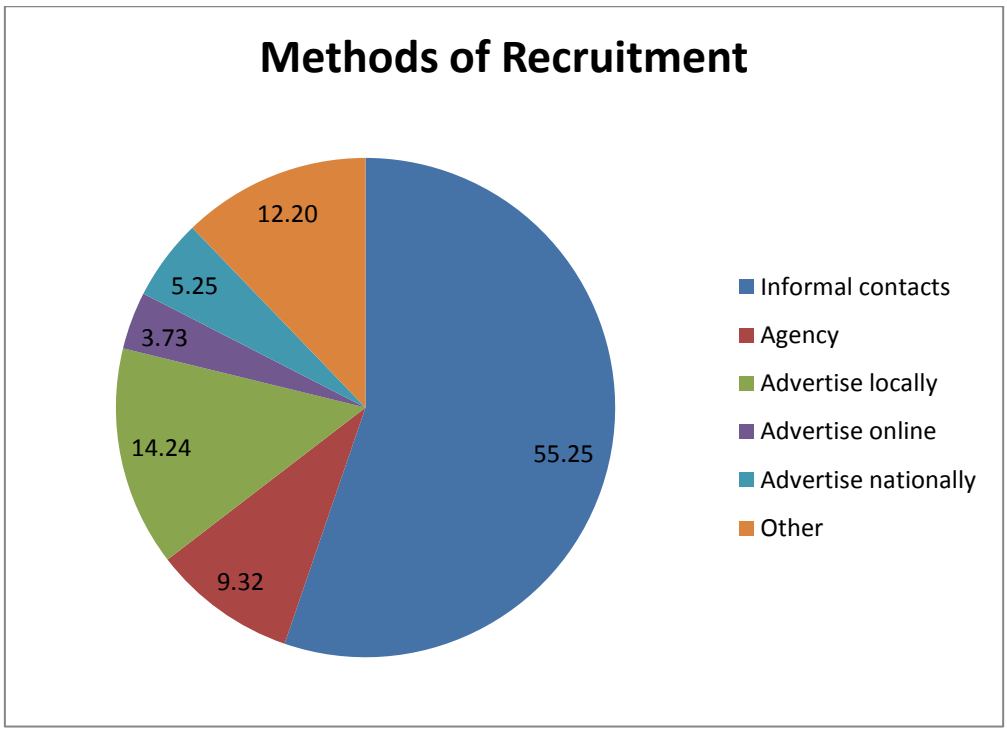

Figure 8.1. Preferred methods of recruitment (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

This reiterates the fact that opportunities to be plugged in to informal networks are more accessible to the farmer.

8.2.2 Conflict in the community

Part of the script in the farming world continues to proclaim loudly against the 'foreigners', 'newcomers, 'outsiders, 'strangers' who have, according to many farm workers, 'disrupted the established pattern of social relationships to be found within most villages' (Newby 1979: 190).

> [Do you interact with the newcomers, or…?] Not really. They don't seem to wanna know you. You walk by them, good morning, they just look straight ahead, don't even look at you (Farm Worker 16)

Farm Worker 7 describes his local community as 'all strangers'.

Newcomers were also blamed by one contractor's wife on reducing work opportunities and destroying her own perception of the rural idyll.

> All of the places are getting split up. They're buying the house and not the field. They're not farmers. It's spoiled the countryside. It has spoiled the countryside (Contractor 2's Wife)

Contractor 6 detaches any sense of affinity between the newcomer and the countryside, strengthening his own sense of belonging by verbally weakening that of the other.

> It's all gone the wrong way round, the youngsters have moved away and people move in, but people that move out to the country shouldn't be out in the country (Contractor 6)

Contractor 3 feels snubbed by newcomers in the area by the lack of small gestures associated with the local community:

> You see them on the road, put our hand up […] They won't even put their hand up (Contractor 3)

Contractor 8 echoed some of Newby's respondents in the 1970s study, who recognised that the local demographic had begun to change less because of the push-pull factors in agriculture and more because of urban-rural migration and the resultant housing prices.

> There was people gone from the land to the towns, and you've gone up two or three generations. Well, they've lost the fact that their families used to work on farms and brought their parents up on a farm. They've all moved away and all the city dwellers who can afford a second home or to live in a nice home have gone to the countryside and taken over all the farm houses, where the farm's been sold away, or taken over the barns that have all been converted. And now the government's done this permitted development, in which you can turn a farm, a reasonably modern farm shed into a dwelling. And that's just drawing more people back into the countryside which is, I mean, I had to move away from the village I was brought up in, cos our farm was more or less attached to the village. I couldn't find anywhere to buy or rent, I certainly couldn't afford to buy it. So I had to move like two or three villages away to find somewhere to rent […] People from far and wide come and live there because the property goes through the roof and they can afford to live there, and it pushes everybody else out (Contractor 8)

In some respects, these perceptions, whether true or adhering to the farming script, act to reinforce a 'them and us' continuum between farm labour contributors and the newcomers, thus strengthening the identity of those who remain a part of the agricultural community. By reinforcing the 'script' around discussions of the 'rural', 'dominant individuals and alliances are able to develop hegemonic stories and

narratives that characterise and justify their actions, thereby tying in other members. To exercise power is 'to be able to generate and disseminate stories that prevail at the expense of those told by others in the network' (Felstead 2005: 17). In their script theory approach to farming and agriculture, Vanclay and Enticott (2011) agree that members of the agricultural community are prone to falling back on scripts both in order to dismiss the knowledge or views of newcomers, as well as to strengthen 'the value of local knowledge and local experience' (ibid: 264).

> Well they don't mix do they? Some of them. I ain't saying everybody. Some people can come here and they're fine, but then you get, well, there was someone who lived down at the bottom of the village used to moan about tractors and that. And it was getting to the fact that they tried to get tractors banned going through the village. Well, but somebody did point out to them that I was employing eight people from the local area (Contractor 6)

The presence of newcomers and their perceived threat to local identities and knowledge structures are not the only seat of conflict for the farm labour contributor. Feldstead et al (2005), in their analyses of work places, recognised how networks are neither consistent nor safe, as 'they are often contested by others, or alliances of other, seeking to subvert established networks or create new ones altogether' (ibid: 17). The majority of participants admitted experiencing some kind of conflict with other actors outside of the workplace in connection to their role on the farm.

> But then there's a chap up the road who, new people have moved into the house next to his farm, and now they're said, they've rung environmental health and said he can't mill his corn now, he has to do it between this hour and that hour because it's not convenient for them. And it's sort of, in my opinion then, he's always been there doing what he's doing now. And they've bought that house and moved into it, and by saying, he can't do that….whereas I know people say, well perhaps they're right. It is an inconvenience to them because it is noise and it is dust, but that noise and the dust was there when they bought that house. If you don't like the countryside. It's like, I wouldn't move into a city. But I wouldn't move into a city and then expect all the traffic to stop and all the lights to be turned out when it was dark. Do you know what I mean? You sort of have to accept what goes on in the area you move into, don't you? (Farmer 2)

Each type of farm labour contributor seems to experience different types of conflict. The site of almost all conflict for the agricultural contractor is public roads, and occasionally the place of work, where the conflict arises from timing of work or noise. Farm workers mostly related stories around livestock escaping, although those who

operated machinery also experienced similar issues to those of contractors. Farmers, in exchanging stories of conflict, tended to refer to episodes where their livestock or land was the point of abuse, rather than themselves. So the contractor and the farm worker are the direct target of conflict, whilst the farmer is the indirect target. This reveals an interesting distinction but one which is challenging to unpick. Unfolding stories around conflict in the community stem from the perception of each respondent, and for the farmer especially, the term conflict is understood in terms of a negative occurrence having an effect on their business, rather than a personal slight, which is how the contractor and farm worker express the same term.

Levels of conflict on the road range from mild to extreme. A mild example is given by Contractor 3 who states how 'somebody gets excited and they'll come up and give you the finger'. Contractor 6 explains how he'd been reported to the police on a number of occasions.

> You get so much abuse. I've had people pull in front of me before and get out and come back and have a word with you like, about how long they've been waiting behind you […] the police will come out yeah, and they'll sit down here and say you should have pulled in, and I say I'm allowed to go past three laybys, I knows all the rules. And I said there ain't no laybys up that road, none at all. So I said where do I pull in to? And they usually go away and say, well try to let 'em pass, or whatever. And I said, well that's dangerous ain't it (Contractor 6)

> They don't like us [They don't like you?] No [Why not?] Well, they think they got more rights on the road than we have, and there's some pretty bulky stuff [Do you get more complaints about driving too fast or driving too slowly?] On the main roads, driving too slow. On the back roads maybe they say you drive too fast but, we've had one road traffic accident, no two road traffic accidents in the last five years, six years [Serious?] Seriously. Well, one of my guys last summer, he actually stopped and there was a guy driving a van like an absolute, and I'm not saying it to defend my guy because it makes no odds to me cos we're both, we are insured, and the guy was driving the van like an absolute nutter. Skidded up hill, my bloke actually stopped, and the bloke he got out, and how he didn't kill himself, he couldn't know. And he actually skidded, let the brakes off, and then skidded again. Because he said, oh, I couldn't see a tractor. I couldn't see because the sun was in my eyes. Well, you don't drive…the sun's getting low in the sky that end of the day anyway, and I know where he did it, and you don't just drive like that. (Contractor 8)

> [Ok. So you don't think people like contractors?] Not really [Is it mainly because of road issues? But aside from that…] Well usually, we turn up on a farm and we do repetitive movements for that day or a couple of days or whatever and you know, you're going up and down, and you have to, and they see these big machines and they think they're going a lot quicker than what they are, and in my village and not only in my village, my drivers know in any village, leave alone my village, you don't drive like hell. And they know my guys. And there's other contractors there and they know who they are and they, I do get told, you know, I know it wasn't one of your guys but so and so operating there and their blokes drive like idiots. And we know your guys don't. And I've been told that quite a few times (Contractor 8)

Some contractors link their reputation to the driving behaviour of themselves or their workers. So the concept of the 'good farmer' is emulated by the contractor through their visible behaviour on public roads, as well as their reputation between farmers.

The public road has increasingly evolved to become an essential agent in the actor network of the farm labour contributor and disruptions often prove Feldstead et al's (2005) assertion that networks are neither consistent nor safe. An extreme example of conflict is given by Farm Worker 10 who believes that he was purposefully hit by a car as a direct result of the work he was carrying out, and that a co-worker was also hit by the same person.

> We have problems all the time. I actually got run over at the beginning, was it the beginning of this year, yeah it was the beginning of this year, I think [Run over by what?] A car [Really?] Yeah, yeah. A cow got out on the road, and we went out on the road and a car came down and actually knocked me over on the road [What, on purpose?] Yeah [No way!] Yeah. We've had quite a lot of trouble with cars and stuff [Did you do anything about it?] Yeah, we rung the police, but the police wouldn't do anything about it. Yeah, it was the same car that nearly ran over [Employer's] son, [Employer's son's name], when he was moving cattle [And you don't know who it was?] No, no. Don't know who it was (Farm Worker 10)

Other efforts to disrupt the lifescape of the farm worker include members of the community blocking roads or field entrances, dangerous driving or particularly dangerous decisions such as letting off air brakes on a small road in order to scare cattle.

Conflict is also, according to many farm labour contributors, stimulated by misunderstandings of seasonal and weather-related pressures. These moments are

almost always attributed to people who are ignorant of local ways. They are perceived to be lacking in the key attributes that a long-term resident would immediately understand due to having been brought up surrounded by noises, smells and timings associated with agriculture. Newcomers seek to change behaviours as a result of noise, smell, timings, traffic. Workers then have to choose whether to comply, adjust, ignore or negotiate in order to minimise disruption to their lifescape.

> We have had people come out with flashlights shining in your eyes and saying you shouldn't be out here and I say, it's gonna rain tomorrow so I've gotta be. Yeah. They don't understand (Contractor 6)

> Sometimes, I guess, we had a neighbour once that we didn't really, they weren't from around here, lived in London and bought this house, and they didn't understand at all (Farm Worker 12)

> I have had experience of working late at night with a tractor and you get the odd person come out who gets a bit upset. But they're not people I've known or who have lived in the village for a long time. It's outsiders who have moved in (Farm Worker 15)

Newcomers are often attributed the blame for work-related conflict even if there is no evidence that they are the perpetrator.

> [Some people said they've had complaints because of noise, because of…] That's probably newcomers that come into the countryside. They're not used to the countryside noises. They all kick up and moan about it (Farm Worker 16)

Contractors describe having changed machinery/type of contracting offered due to conflict.

> We used to run three combine harvesters. One of the reasons I gave it up, because it's um, you know, cos it's a holiday area and when you're harvesting July/August time, it was such a pain to move them around that it was a factor in why I gave it up […] Cos of the area we were covering, we always had to keep below ten foot six, so we never ran massive, you know nowadays they're bigger than that again but, um, yeah, it's difficult to move them around. People don't understand it and they were, you know, why are you on the road. And we used to, you know, I've got up about five in the morning and moved before, and even then you get, people…and I know farmers and contractors got a bad name in as far as keeping traffic behind but we've never done it. We've always pulled in and let, as soon as we can, and let the traffic pass. But you still get a major problem. Maybe I'm too sensitive but I

> never really enjoyed it because people will always get irate and the fact that it's only once a year, and they're on the way to work, and you've held 'em up for two minutes it, you know, but I guess that's the world we live in really (Contractor 4)

Sensitivity to these issues was particularly common amongst contractors.

> It does bother me because I don't want to inflict on anyone else when we're going out of our way not to cause problems for anyone (Contractor 5)

Therefore conflict presents significantly more than a nuisance or discomfort as some contractors are forced to actively divert activities or change the entire structure of their work situation in order to avoid further disruption. This adds to an already overloaded virtual cart of constraints and pressures that already weigh heavily on the wellbeing and work-life balance of the contractor.

A third path of conflict stems from interactions between non-farmers and other non-human agents partaking in the lifescape of the farmer, such as sheep worrying or the chopping down of trees on private land with permission.

> You say about conflict, the only one, which is a vet, believe it or not, is down in the dip near the other side here. She had a very vicious dog that attacked my sheep and eventually, over a period of time, managed to attack about 62 of 'em, that's what they killed [What?! Her dog killed 62 sheep?] Yeah, 62 sheep on four separate occasions. And we had no idea who's dog was doing it. And we kept on and on. And it was this lady down here (Farm Worker 17)

Three groups appeared out of these lifescapes when probed regarding newcomers in the village. Those exist who stick to the script regardless, those who initially perform the script but when pressed demonstrate more leniency towards to the newcomers, and those who perceive the presence of newcomers as inevitable and actively seek to integrate them in order to establish harmony. Attitudes towards newcomers differed but farmers or those holding more responsibility within the business appear to feel an obligation to cross any divides between themselves, the agricultural world and the newcomers. This is usually done by invitations to lunch, a drink in the pub, or a tour of the farm.

> There's a new guy that's just moved in, right at the bottom here and I just try and be affable and friendly. And it turns out he's a vet and he came in here and introduced himself and you know, I'd seen him in the road, I said come down whenever you like. He came down, I took him in the cider cellar, gave him a couple of pints of cider, and he was happy with that. And then he vet checked

> my puppies for free! So the job's a goodun! So that's another friend (Farm Worker 17)
>
> Yep, the people across the road, they only moved in here two years ago and you know, the day they moved in, we went over with a bottle of wine, you know, welcome to the village. If you want anything, here we are. And they've had two little kiddies since, you know, and they bring their little kids over here to see the cows and the calves and if they're out in the road and they see us in the yard, they'll stop and have a chat (Farmer 15)

To some extent the scales have tipped from a situation whereby initially newcomers felt unwelcome, where they needed "three generations in the churchyard before you're accepted around here"' (Newby 1977: 334), to one where farm labour contributors feel like the minority as their efforts to produce their work can be genuinely hindered by the attitudes or actions of newcomers. The power balance has shifted from the farming community to the newcomers.

Farm Worker 6 pinpoints the ongoing problem with perceptions and aspirations of the rural idyll, and how the lifescape of the farm worker extends beyond the geographical boundaries of the farm to intercept the lives of others living in or around the boundaries of the village and beyond.

> I wouldn't say it was always the newcomers, but mostly, I would say. People that have obviously grown up in a city or a town. They think they can come to the country and obviously have a more tranquil, peaceful life. When obviously people are trying to go about their day to day work and business (Farm Worker 6).
>
> We've got a little lane going through the farm and they always complain that the hedges aren't cut because, you know, once a year they want to walk down there. Well, as a farmer I'm not allowed to cut the hedges until August. And they say it's a danger, but they can't get that letting their dog run around the field, it's not wildlife friendly it's not animal friendly, it's not anything friendly. They're upsetting the wildlife, they're upsetting the animals and they're walking across my business. And they will claim that they love the countryside when actually they're totally abusing it (Farmer 10)
>
> You know, there's cattle on the road at midnight, people say, oh get your bloody cattle off the road. Well, actually they're not my cattle but I'll help my neighbour get them in. You know what I mean. A lot of people that move to the village

> now do it for a way of life and their perception is just what they want out of it, not the big picture. You know, someone buys a spaniel, you know, it works it's way along a hedge when all the birds are nesting. It's doing a lot of damage. But as far as they're concerned, you know, the countryside is there for their enjoyment rather than their enjoyment is being destroyed by their actions (Farmer 10)

> People have moved into the village, that have been from London and whatever. Don't like the smells, don't like this, don't like that. And I'm like, well, I'm afraid this is the country and this is my workplace, and this is what happens, you know. The milking machines will go on at five o clock in the morning is cos I've gotta milk the cows. And then when the cows walk down the road and they poo going down the road, that's what cows do in the countryside. You know. Basically, that's what you've got to expect when you move to the countryside, and within a few years they move back into the town (Farmer 15)

> New people into the village and, you know, not used to country life at all. They see this idyllic country life with lambs skipping around but, you know the nuts and bolts of it is, it's not like that is it? (Farmer 15)

Farmers and farm workers alike sustained versions of their occupational identities by citing their workscape as a sum of many parts, which could not be delineated according to the boundaries of the farm or the farm yard. Work activity is rarely limited to one space whilst noise and smell become uncontainable agents, products of agricultural labour whose boundaries are less dependent on human intervention and more likely to be influenced by changes in the weather.

Newcomers are perceived as a possible disturbance to the lifescape of many farm labour contributors, especially when active measures are taken to either physically harm the individual themselves, or block essential work from being undertaken through conscious efforts, such as law enforcement attempts or unconscious efforts, such as allowing one's dog to sheep worry or by chopping down trees on somebody's land.

> Our dad's cousin does a bit of contracting and he was, what was he doing, silaging one night. It was gonna rain the next day. And the last field they done was right on the edge of a village, and they were still going at two o clock in the morning. Still silaging. And the police turned up. Um, you're causing a noise, can you stop. No, I can't stop. Oh, we're getting complaints from the village that there's tractors up and down the road and people can't sleep. We said this is one night of the year, it's not happening every year. It's gonna rain tomorrow.

> This farmer's gotta get this crop in to feed his cows for next winter, so we're gonna finish and you can't stop us. People started parking their cars across gateways so they couldn't get in and out (Farmer 15)

> it's pretty much stacked out with retired people. Retired professionals who have retired here and wanna keep it as a museum. They don't want any industry at all (Farmer 6)

> They come out here, they don't want nothing to go on. So we're an eyesore to 'em but they don't appreciate we manage what they love to come out here for (Farmer 5)

Several farmers and farm workers base their judgement on a case by case basis.

> I obviously know a lot of people in the village. I'm always amicable. I won't say I would be friends with them or whatever, it's just basic conversation, a quick hi or whatever. There's nobody in the village that I would frown on or that wouldn't put their hand up to me or anything (Farm Worker 15)

> People who have lived there for any length of time, soon begin to realise. Newcomers are always a little bit shocked, a little bit standoffish. But once they get the hang of what's going on, they usually buy into it. Cos we're more use to them than we are harm, you know. If they want something done or moved, what's better than a local farmer with his handler, or he's got his trailer. He's just, well, he's handy isn't he. He's got everything that you might need (Farm Worker 17)

> It's really an individual thing. What I find, um, and I will probably have the same opinion I have to say, rightly or wrongly, so a lot of the existing community, the agricultural community, if someone comes to the area not involved in agriculture but just moves to the area, whatever, and are happy to just mix in with life as it is, all's fine. You know, we've got some new neighbours just there and they're absolutely spot on. But you get the other people that come in then want to change everything because they don't like the look of you or they don't like the fact that the tractors going at 9 o clock at night, they'll pretty quickly alienate themselves. We've had a bit of that. And so those are the ones that are difficult to accept (Farmer 14)

In his discussion of the 'loss of community' in rural areas, Newby (1979) defends the newcomer, pointing out that 'had a substantial number of urban dwellers not chosen to live in the countryside the consequences may have been even more severe; the

complete destruction of both the social and the physical fabric of the English village' (ibid: 191). A study carried out in 2000 examining farming and local rural conflicts discovered that 57% of incomer and farmers interviewed reported the presence of incomer-local conflicts, although the incidence of such reporting was much higher amongst farmers (88%) than locals (58%) and outside incomers (51%) (Winter et al 2001). The reasons for this are not explored further but a sense of occupational defensiveness does appear to exist amongst the farming community.

In spite of perceptions regarding disruptions to the cohesiveness of village life, and statements indicating personal withdrawal from the community, the majority of farm labour contributors, when queried as to feelings of responsibility towards the community, were extremely positive.

8.3 A Note on Gender and the Community

The most significant space within which female agricultural workers experienced difficulty arising from their gender was within the local community, through the refusal of males to identify with them as farm workers. Farmer 13 described how this was the case in the past and how, for her, the situation has changed.

> It's changed enormously. And you saying about, um, not having a voice. Very much the case for me when I came in, into farming. Absolutely women didn't drive tractors and they didn't, um, you know, I'd answer the phone. I ran the business side of it anyway and, 'can I speak to your husband', 'no, he's not available, can I help', 'no, no, what time will be a good time to get him', 'can I take a message' (Farmer 13)

The implication is an increased acceptance of her occupational role within agriculture, but this might be partly due to her being known as an established farmer within the area. Two younger females who both work as farmers conveyed how they had experienced misogyny in the workplace. Farm Worker 3 also describes an incidence where her mother, who also works within the agriculture industry, fell victim to such behaviour.

> She would never let anyone tell her she couldn't do something because she was a woman. And she's very much, you know, even now driving a lorry, it's another bizarre thing that a woman shouldn't be doing in many people's eyes. You know, like she says, she turns up to farms and they're like, 'oh, do you want us to reverse it for you', and mum's like, 'well, it's my lorry and I drive it

> every day so no thanks'. I mean, she gets really really angry about it (Farm Worker 3)

Saugeres (2002) in her study of a French farming community, ascertains this behaviour to 'farmers who have appropriated agricultural mechanisation, defining it as another masculine activity from which women are excluded' (ibid: 148). As respondents associated the female worker with nurturing livestock above, so to, according to Saugeres, the 'tractor has become a symbol of masculine identity and power' (ibid: 155); an assumption experienced by Farm Worker 3.

> It snowed. And this guy had driven down the lane and got his car stuck. And I'd just driven past on my quad bike, and I was like, 'oh, are you ok', and he was like, 'um, no, I need someone to pull me out', and I was like 'oh, I'll nip up and get the tractor and come down' and he was like, 'oh, can't you send your husband to do it' and I was like, 'what', and he was like 'can't you send your husband', and I was like, 'I haven't got a husband' and he was like, 'well, isn't there a man around that can help'? And I was like, 'you know what, you can just stay there actually'. And I just drove off! (Farm Worker 3)

Such cultural discrimination against women is symptomatic of the larger cultural hangover that farmers accuse the wider community of suffering from with regards to being out of touch with the modern farming industry.

8.4 Relationships with the Wider Community

The act of placing themselves within the wider society of the country revealed interesting interpretations of the situation of each farm labour contributor. The majority of respondents here felt more understood by people who lived locally due to their either being brought up around agriculture or witnessing some kind of work-related task being performed on a frequent basis. However, with regards to the wider community, differences regarding images of self and society were significant. These perceptions tie in with national-level constraints to capacities and opportunities in chapter nine and so to avoid repetition, ideas regarding the wider community and self-perception will be developed further in section 9.3.4.

8.5 Conclusion

The results of this chapter, combined with those of the preceding chapter, reveal sensitivities to network relationships between people, the land and the community and demonstrate that due to multiple actors, both human and non-human, clear distinctions

cannot be made between the variant factors. Emotions pertaining to consubstantiality, connectedness and attachment are neither entirely fixed nor specific to any one entity.

Whereas historically the farm worker belonged to an occupational community, an encapsulated community or a farm-centred community, this has now transitioned to either a farm-centred community or, more commonly, a dispersed-encapsulated community. Several farm workers suggested a sense of belonging to two communities. Rather than consider the linkage between farm labour contributors and their immediate worlds in terms of traditional perceptions of communities, as in the immediate rural web within which they become entangled, due to transformations in communications etc, it is more beneficial to examine connections as part of a network and regard community as such. Young Farmers Club might not be placed locally, but nevertheless, what it offers is a community, one which can be accessed from anywhere due to mobile phones and internet technology. And while farm workers and contractors might be based in a different location to their workspace, due to rural communities no longer being so cut off from one another, these networks, especially the agricultural community which has to expand its breadth due to farms and farming lifescapes becoming so depleted, community is no longer what you can see from you doorstep but what is encountered in the wider lifescape. The agricultural farm labour contributor largely belongs to a dispersed farming community; where the farmer seeks advice from the mobile contractor; where machinery parts are no longer fixed in the village but are sent away to specialist repair experts or engineers, sometimes overseas. Agronomists, veterinarians, technologists and numerous other actors contribute to this dispersed community, where historically, almost all such tasks would have been done on farm[16]. Encapsulated conceptually, dispersed physically, with each respondent self-placed close to or far from an imaginary boundary existing between themselves and other members of the local communities within which they operate.

Where social capital has disintegrated between neighbouring farms due to the increasing cost of modern machinery, shortages in labour and many farms going out of business, this platform for the exchange of cultural capital that might have been acquired from significant interaction with other farmers has been moved from other farmers to other farm labour contributors. Where the farmer employs one or more workers, their relationships allow for significant information exchange, and contractors revealed earlier in the thesis how they provide not only machinery and labour but support and advice to farmers and vice versa.

[16] An example of off-farm labour that has almost always been required in agriculture is that of the veterinarian.

This leads the thesis nicely into the next chapter, where the Human Capability Approach echoes this perception and allows all network actors discussed so far to be examined according to a framework where the missing links are finally encompassed in this story of the farm labour contributor; skills, knowledge and experience.

Chapter Nine: Career Pathways in Farming: Choice, Capacity and Opportunity

> *A person's advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability - less real opportunity- to achieve those things that she has reason to value* (Sen 2010: 231).

9.0 Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of qualitative results analysis and seeks to contest Newby's assertion that the identification with the 'rural' 'merely stems from the inability of the inhabitants to transcend the spatial constraints imposed upon them' which are linked to incapacities rather than choice (1977: 99). It reveals instead an osmotic process where individuals move between rural, urban and 'other-rural' spaces in the formation of their lifescapes, and where personal agency and cultural changes present possibilities to transcend traditionally imposed occupational constraints. Referring back to the Human Capability Framework, aspects of choice, capacities, and opportunities are examined from the point of view of family, education, and wider society, shedding much needed light on current issues regarding availability of labour in the contemporary agricultural labour market. Finally, the chapter leads into an analysis of farm labour contributors' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, sustainable intensification, in recognition of the fact that farmers are often not the 'frontline' workers dealing directly with their land, and knowledge exchange is now common between all farm labour contributors

9.1 Influential Agents in the Accruement of Capacities

Community, place attachment, human and animal relationships, the land, the weather, the seasons, and technology, all play an integral part in the lifescape of those contributing directly to labour on the land. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight illustrate the multiplicity of agents linked to, acted upon by, and acting upon the wellbeing, responsibilities and freedoms of, the farm labour contributor (Figure 9.1).

Here, the differing routes to becoming a farm labour contributor are examined, adding finer detail to this overall depiction of the contemporary farm worker and establishing the trajectory of these individuals, in order to understand where any failures in the matching process between capacities and opportunities might be at play. This chapter broaches the position of the farm labour contributor as a resource in the wider sustainability debate.

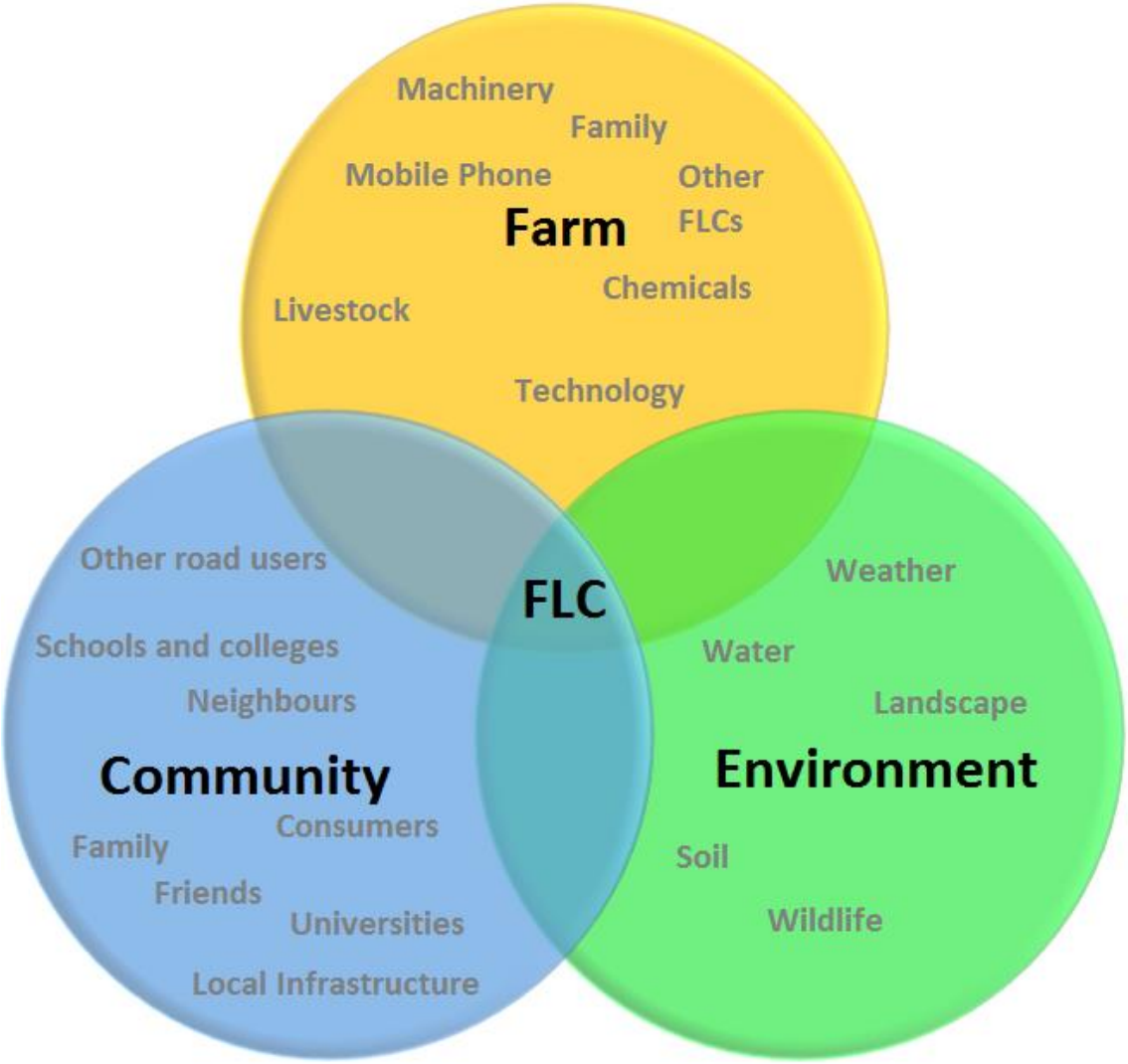

Figure 9.1. Lifescape model for the farm labour contributor

9.1.1 Occupational Choice

As described in Chapter Four, capacities refer to the skills, knowledge and attitudes that people possess which allow them to capitalise on opportunities presented within the labour market (Tipples and Morriss 2002). The accruement of these capacities rarely occurs in isolation from external actors within the farm labour contributor's networks but the level of influence of each type of actor can vary significantly. Those agents possessing most leverage in the ability to accumulate capacities appear to be; the family unit and heritage; farmers and farm culture; educational establishments; technology and machinery; and the state. What constitutes a capacity or an opportunity also varies depending on the type of farm labour contributor in question.

Roots and routes

In a study of the socialisation process on Scottish family farms, Fischer (2007) points out that in order to understand the occupational choice of farmers' children, any study

needs to go ‘beyond behaviouralist and structuralist forms of analysis of farmers’ children’s career decisions and [focus] on how farmer’s children develop farmer and non-farmer identity’ (ibid: 1). Identity formation in the context of farm workers therefore proves invaluable as a focus here. Occupational choice in the context of succession might be explained in part by a sense of obligation and attachment to one’s own farm and family which subsequently creates opportunities.

> I’d love to go into the police force and sort of do that, but because I’m an only child, once the farm’s gone, it’s gone […] we could never afford to sell it and then go, oh yeah, we’ll buy it back again (Farmer 2)

But it cannot be so easily explained in the context of the career choice of all farm labour contributors, as each possesses a different level of investment, financial or emotional, in the farms or businesses worked at. Many farm workers, for example, have little to no capital investment in the holdings where they work. If incentives and opportunities created by a family farm are not the key driver in the occupational choice of the farm worker, additional factors must be at play.

The roots of the farm worker

The majority of all respondents did come from a farming background, across all three cohorts of farm labour contributors (Figure 9.2). For those farmers who did not come from a farming family, two were women who had married farmers and become farmers alongside them, one was a farm manager who had entered the industry later in life but had grown up in an agricultural community, and the other’s father was loosely related to the horticulture industry. Almost all contractors came from a farming or agricultural contracting family, except for one whose father was a timber merchant. With regards to the farm workers, 6 out of 17 stated a background outside of farming (Table 9.1).

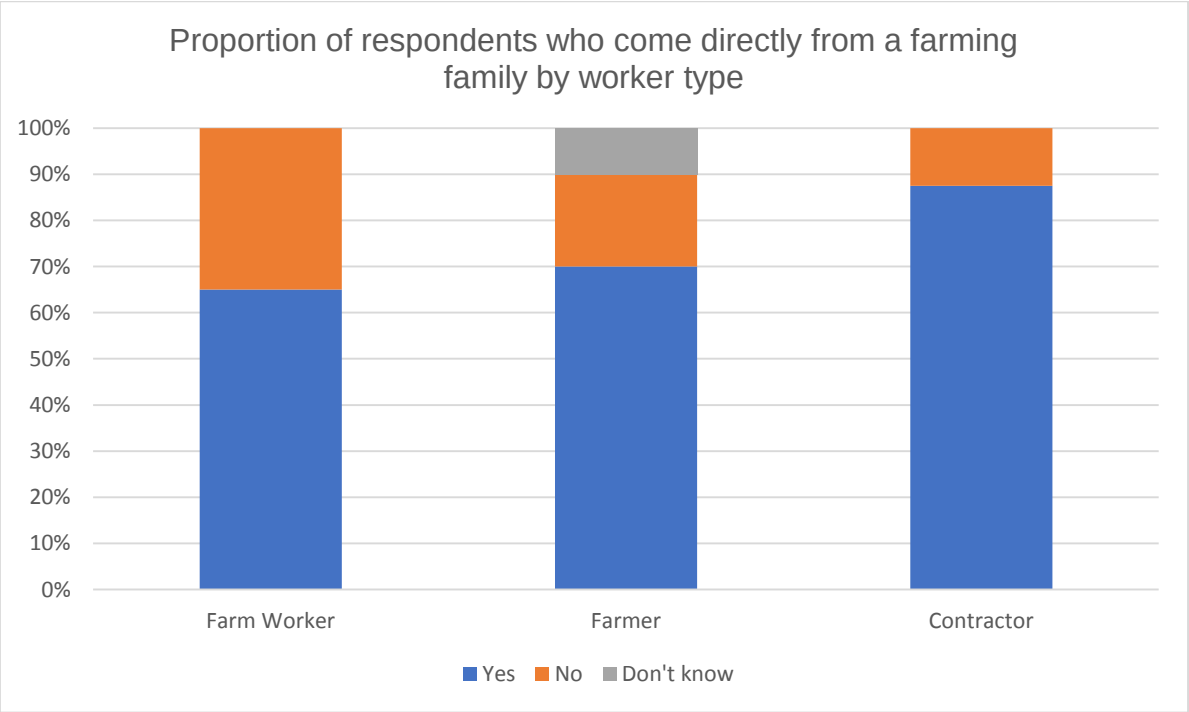

Figure 9.2. Proportion of respondents who come directly from a farming family[17] (*Source*: Interview data)

Table 9.1

Family background and route to farming of farm workers from a non-farming family.

Farm Worker	Parental Occupation	Route to farming
A (7)	Father worked in construction	Helped out at a farm while still at school, began working on same farm straight after school.
B (8)	No mention	Interest developed through Rural Sciences course at school, joined Young Farmers as a result, worked in construction, married a farmer's daughter and now works on her family farm.
C (9)	Father passed away at a young age. Mother didn't work	Helped out at a stable when young, started to help out on the farm, continued into employment.
D (10)	Father works in construction, mother worked with horses	Work experience through school, and stayed.

[17] Result of 'Don't know' stems from respondent/s not being asked relevant question

E (16)	Family worked in construction	Worked on a farm straight from school, then moved into forestry and lorry driving, then back to farm work.
F (13)	Both parents were teachers, BUT grandparents were farmers	University (non-agriculture), employment in environmental education, Wwoofing, then farm work employment.

9.1.2 Pathways to the Farm as a Place of Employment

For all cohorts coming from a farming family, three obvious routes were available (Figure 9.3). Firstly, the direct route, where the individual transitions directly from education into a farming job, either on the family farm or, if they are not the potential successor or if sufficient work is not available on their home farm, on a farm elsewhere. The second and thirds routes are either via further or higher education, or travel, before ultimately arriving at a job on a farm. And the final route is away from farming altogether, with no likely return to the industry. Those who have taken the final route are not considered in this study (for further work in this area see Cassidy and McGrath 2015).

Leaving the farm

A common theme revealed in previous research involves farmers' children being actively encouraged by their parents to leave the farm and gain experience both via educational establishments and/or on other farms. (Villa 1999) (Chiswell 2014) (Gasson and Errington 1993).

> We all feel it's important to go out and work for somebody else before you stay working at home. So my brother did the same . You know, it isn't any good staying at home your whole life. You need to see some outside life (Farm Worker 17)

Occasionally this pursuit of 'other-rural' experience by the respondent was interrupted, usually as a result of family requirements or emergency. For example, Farmer 10 alternated between studying, working on other farms and working at home according to relationship changes within the household.

> [So coming home and then going away again, did you go away and work on the other farms to get more experience, or was it because there wasn't enough work at home?] Neither really. My mum and dad split up so, you know, that was the original reason I came home. My dad then remarried, so I left again. And

then he divorced again and I came home again! So, it was personal, yeah (Farmer 10)

I got thrown out of the family farm when I was about 17 [Was there a reason for that?] I just didn't get on with an older brother who inherited the family farm. So I then kept pigs for a while, worked for one or two other people, went to Bicton Agricultural College, then I worked for a company which was a subsidiary of Unilever selling animal feeding stuffs and things of that nature. Then moved on to selling chemicals, and ended up being a sales manager with that company before being made redundant before we were taken over [Right. And then…?] I purchased this 22 years ago (Farmer 17)

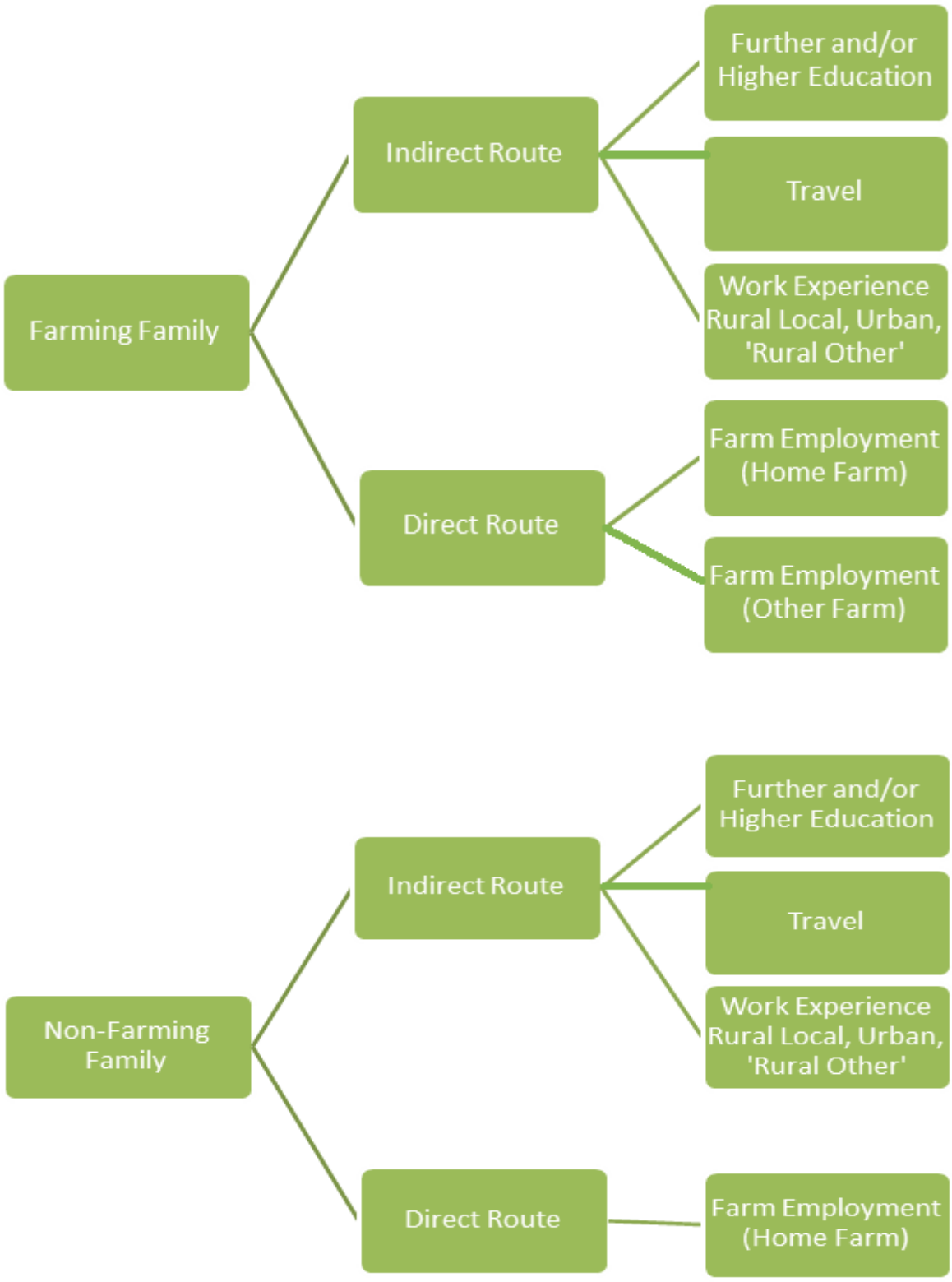

Figure 9.3. Pathways to a career in farming

For two respondents, leaving the family farm was less a result of choice and more a response to the 'push' effect of succession of other siblings, forcing them to move to other farms to stay in the industry. Although primogeniture as a social norm has

become less prescribed, (Errington 2002), in the case of these two respondents, the oldest or male sibling was still given preference to become successor to the family farm. Taylor and Norris (2000: 277) describe the non-successor as the 'off-farm sibling' in their examination of fairness and conflict over farm transfer, but few studies have provided any real insight into the off-farm sibling and how a desire or choice to farm forces them to seek new opportunities detached from their own farm as no space is made for them in the succession process. Such extended insight might prove a valuable contribution to understandings of the current labour crisis. A proportion of farm workers are made up of off-farm siblings who wish to continue in agriculture as a career. The afore-mentioned respondents who identified as farm workers talked of how they had to permanently leave the farm due to succession.

> Unfortunately, our farm will go to a son rather than a daughter, even though I'm the oldest, it will go to my brother rather than me [How do you feel about it still going to your brother? Is that an issue?] It's really old-fashioned and it isn't really meant to be true anymore, but it doesn't really bother me personally. It just frustrates me that it's so sexist […] [So you wouldn't want to take it over?] If I was the next one to have it then I'd be over the moon about it but I've always known that's it's not gonna happen so, I haven't really dreamed about it if you see what I mean (Farm worker 3)

> [My brother] actually works at home with my parents. So, he's a partner in the business at home. He's four years older than me, so.. (Farm Worker 6)

Those individuals who enter farming from a non-farming family via a direct route tend to either go into it straight from school, or start working before they leave school at weekends or during their holidays. Farm worker 16 describes how there was no gap between his last day at school at the age of 16, and beginning a job on a local farm.

> I left school probably on the Friday and went to work on the farm on the Monday (Farm Worker 16)

Several of the farmers interviewed talked about how people would turn up at the farm gate asking for a job, and subsequently then went on to become full time farm workers.

> We had one kid who's a friend of my daughter who turned up, a small boy on a bike wanting a Saturday job, and he was very very good. And he worked here for probably about six years and he ended up sort of working here more or less full-time (Farmer 16)

The more indirect routes into farm work demonstrate how people arrive at farm work via other jobs, via further or higher education, or by marrying into farming. Amongst all

the farm workers interviewed who had not come from a farming family, for all but one, their interest in farming had been sparked whilst they were children, either at school (via a course such as rural sciences), due to having worked on a school or local farm, or having been a part of an organisation such as Young Farmers Club (YFC). Therefore, it is not only the family and heritage that proves key in capacity-building and attitude formation towards a career in farming, but educational establishments and organisations for young people also have an important role to play.

> [So what brought you to farming?] […] So, as part of the curriculum in those days, there was a thing called rural science and as part of biology, chemistry and all the rest of it, one of the options was rural science and you used to go to the farm and learn about growing plants and animals and the school had a rugby pitch, it had a football pitch, and it had hockey and a music room, and it had a farm. And it was one of your options to go to the farm. And I picked that […] So, up until 18, 17 or 18 when I left school, I was involved in this farm group at the school. And that cut my teeth in farming […] it was about animal husbandry and caring for animals, and the daily grind of having something living that's in your care […] But then after school, there was a club after school twice or three times a week. And you could go up there and become a member and take part in two hours of activity after school. And that's what I did, and that got me hooked on it all. And that organisation is called Young Farmers, and then ever since, when you left school, you went on to the Young Farmers out in the big bad world which was basically just a social club that was involved in animals so I carried on that existence socially [So after 18?] So, after 18 I stayed involved in farming, and Young Farmers in the open world is 18-26 year olds, and by the time you come to 26 you sort of drift away from it because it's a young hobby, and by 26 people get married, people have kids, people drift away, people move out of the area. So, the clubs tend to be, the 26 year olds tend to become advisors and helpers, which I did for a few years, and then I drifted, you just drift, have kids and drift away (Farm Worker 8)

Farm Worker 8 went on to work outside of farming for many years until he met his farming-family wife and returned to agricultural work through this new attachment. Of those who married into farming, there was usually at least a loose interest in food or farming before becoming a full-time farmer or farm worker as a result of the marriage.

9.1.3 Young Farmers Club

Several organisations were mentioned by respondents with regards to belonging, identity and community, but the club most frequently referred to was the Young

Farmers Club. Primarily associated with rurally-based youths, by default, the Young Farmers Club offers more than just a source of social capital, in that it actively encourages participation in agricultural work and careers. Farm worker 12 reveals that, for her, Young Farmers Club extends beyond the rural boundary and has acted as an agent of inclusivity for children who are not privy to the farming world, thus fulfilling a role that other educational establishments appear not to.

> I've got friends who haven't even been brought up, you know, they've been brought up in towns and come to Young Farmers and love it. And that's what it's about. And I think, even Young Farmers, unless you've got a friend in Young Farmers, if you're outside of that, you don't have a clue. I think it should be pushed, you know, that it isn't, it's so stereotypical farming, which it isn't really at all once you're in it. But, it is really stereotypical, and at schools you wouldn't get pushed into it at all (Farm Worker 12)

> [Your friends that came into Young Farmers that aren't from a farming background, do they work in farming now?] Yeah, so like, one of my friends, she, you know, she went to, she lives in [local town], I met her through Young Farmers, and now, she's like, she was the face of Young Farmers last week, and has really pushed, and got scholarships, and, um, yeah, and that's, and now she loves it. And she's really interested in. It's really weird to see people who are actually clueless about farming, but now, once you get into it. Like, she used to hate cows, and now she loves it. So, that's cool to see [Yeah, that's really cool. So, Young Farmers could play a role in it?] Yeah absolutely. But it's getting people to Young Farmers. It's not necessarily Young Farmers. Once you're in Young Farmers, you get an understanding, but it's actually getting people into it (Farm worker 12)

> Supporting youngsters and getting people into it, like Young Farmers, encouraging young people to actually show what farmers actually do, rather than the more general perception of what people think they do (Farm Worker 6)

Other respondents referred to the Young Farmers Club with regards to the accruement of capabilities.

> I did loads when I was younger [as a part of Young Farmers Club]. Like public speaking, and stock judging, you know, so many different things (Farm Worker 3)

> Yeah, I did a lot of Young Farmers [Club] really. I was chairman of the local Young Farmers group. And yeah, I did a lot of competitions and probably learned a lot of skills from them as well (Farm Worker 6)

Participation in the YFC activities also appeared to have positive implications for employer perception and recruitment, where the club as a springboard was recognised over and above an individual's heritage.

> Someone who's been in Young Farmers and been doing it since they were like, you know, just judging cattle or just working with cattle or sheep or pigs since they were…that's what the young farmer's do, you know, from like a young age and as a teenager. So, yeah, you really notice that when people have been Young Farmers come to the farm, as opposed to people who haven't been. You know, you notice that difference straight away (Farmer 12)

Contractors equally mentioned the role of YFC in their lives, although several stated that they had attended infrequently due to work commitments in contracting, even as older teenagers. Whilst contractor 8 declared nostalgically that the focus of the organisation had changed since he had been a member.

> Everybody was attached to farming when I went to Young Farmers. We joined the YFC, I don't think I knew anybody that didn't, so you went to school, you went home to work and you joined the YFC. A lot of the younger ones here go to Young Farmers but it's a social thing nowadays. We used to, you had a chance to learn all sorts of skills when I went but, I don't know, they do do things like that now but it's not probably to the intensity that we did it (Contractor 8)

According to the interview results, the likelihood of an adult choosing to work in farming without any contact with agriculture as a child or socialisation into a group where the adoption of farming as a career is encouraged, appears less likely. Therefore, the early years of an individual's development are crucial in the development of capacities – knowledge, skills and attitudes, if they are to consider a career in farming. The role of all actors and actants influencing the early years of a potential farm labour contributor is, therefore, of considerable significance according to the Human Capability Framework. If this influence proves to be weak or negative, then the matching process between capacities and opportunities cannot occur.

9.1.4 Choice: Obligation, the 'Farming Disease' or Freedom of Choice

> *Farming is an occupation that in many ways has changed very little and embraces values that emphasise tradition and continuity […] but how farmers interpret their choice of career and lifestyle could also encourage a different view of how farming has changed* (Wuthnow 2015: 7-8)

Potter and Lobley (1996) state that 'family farming remains the most hereditary of professions' (ibid: 286) and this appears to extend beyond the boundaries of the family farm to both hired workers and contractors. But the reasons for this successive pattern are likely to be transforming in alignment with wider social and cultural changes more nationally, where personal values and meanings attached to the work itself drive career pathway choices instead of them being dictated by local constraints.

The process of farmer succession is detailed in numerous studies (Potter and Lobley 1996; Chiswell 2014) but fewer studies examine the perpetuation of farm worker succession in British society. A rare response amongst participants was that they progressed into farm work through a lack of overt choice. Historically, the progression of certain children from a farming family into a farming occupation was a natural and unquestioned given, 'an obligation and a course that was decided for them' (Villa 1999: 333). Whilst farmer succession was likely attributable to a sense of duty, farm worker succession was more likely to arise from 'the extremities of poverty and wealth [which] shaped the social fabric of the countryside long before the Industrial Revolution began' (Danziger 1988: 1). Prior to the 21st century, the children of farm workers were isolated, often tied to farm-provided accommodation and relatively poor. This limited both their occupational and physical mobility, driving them to follow in the footsteps of their parents (Danziger 1988). But transformations in mobility, both physical and social, have led to this no longer being the case. Rural inhabitants are no longer as spatially bound by such constraints, endowing them with a greater level of occupational choice. Possession of personal vehicles is no longer limited to the wealthy, allowing rural workers access to a similar pool of work as their urban counterparts. And compulsory, standardised education endeavours to provide a more equal platform for school children nationwide. And yet, despite this, non-capital related succession in agriculture is still highly prevalent. If political powerlessness is no longer the driver in non-capital related succession, it is important to try to understand the forces at play in capacity-building and opportunity incentives for the contemporary farm worker. The 'drift from the land' has been sufficiently understood, but what causes the farm worker to 'stay in place'? Gasson and Errington (1993) suggest that the processes involved include either socialisation, where 'the family of origin influences the children's occupational

choice' and self-selection, and where 'personal values [steer] individuals towards their chosen careers' (ibid: 91).

An obligation to farm?

The career paths of older farm labour contributors appeared to occur less by choice and more because of familial expectation or obligation. Mobility constraints were likely to have played some role in this but a deeper sense existed of carrying on; carrying the farm, carrying the family tradition and carrying the family. Similar results were discovered in a study of farmer succession in three Devon parishes external to the this study area's remit (Chiswell 2014).

> I didn't really wanna do it. I was pushed into it, I was coerced (Contractor 8)

> It was always expected of me that I'd come home on the farm. And erm, then I came home to the farm when I left, because I didn't really know what to do particularly (Farmer 7)

> I wanted to be a teacher. But my brother was the academic and my father said I hadn't got the brains really to go on to further education. And it was expensive. You came home and worked on the farm and I was almost the last of the generation of farmer's daughters that came home and worked on the farms (Farmer 5)

Contractor 8 felt that his father had forced him to become a contractor, rather than allowing him to choose his own career path. However, rather than desire a career in a different industry, Contractor 8 admitted a preference to stay in the farming industry, with an original desire for a more traditional farming route over contracting. Other respondents, such as Contractor 1, felt that a career in agriculture was the only route.

> I left school in '38, fourteen. Not fifteen, fourteen, and times became very tough at the time, for money-wise, like. Father come to the conclusion he'd have to go out to work as well as run the farm. Course, we'd only got 60 acres, was it? Only small holdings at that time there. And, when I left school see, he said, [his name] can stay home and do the farming (Contractor 1)

Overwhelmingly, most respondents revealed little overt familial pressure to work in farming.

> My parents have never pushed us into doing this. We've done it off our own back, so if anything, they wanted us to, like, as soon as I finished college, I wanted to come home. And my parents didn't want me to at all. They really

> were pushing me to go out and do other or work for someone else (Farm Worker 12)
>
> My parents they didn't like push us into farming or anything like that. They didn't really care what we did. Um, I always imagined that I'd be a chef and that's why I started working in a pub. And then, um, why I sort of started working in a restaurant. And then I started to do that, I thought this is not what I wanna do. And um, I thought, well agriculture in New Zealand is such a booming industry and they're in dire need of people with some sort of qualification. So, I thought, well, I may as well just do that and see what happens once I finish my degree (Farm Worker 4)

Displays of freedom from the constraints of familial expectation was an extremely common response amongst the younger participants as well as farmer parents of young adult children, representing a significant shift in the family culture of farming families and mirroring Villa's findings in a study in Norway of how, over three generations, the farming ideology transitioned from a 'society of duty' to a 'marketplace of opportunity' (1999: 331). The implication of this change is that the current generation of both capital-related and non-capital-related farm labour contributors possesses a greater level of freedom to choose their occupation than their predecessors.

Interestingly though, a small number of FLCs were steered away from a career in agriculture by members of their (farming) family.

> Well, dad never really wanted any of us to go into agriculture cos he would always try and tell us that it was a rubbish job and there was no money [Oh really?] And that we should go and get a proper job, and none of us have (Farm Worker 3)

Despite active parental discouragement and being an 'off-farm sibling', Farm Worker 3 and her siblings all pursued a career in farming, an example of how negative socialisation and freedom in occupational choice did not deter them from 'staying in place'. This parental attitude was rare in the lifescapes of most of the younger participants.

Obligation arising from a 'society of duty' was not applicable to all farm labour contributors previously. Newby's data from the 1970s, demonstrated a clear lack of desire by respondents for their children to follow in their occupational footsteps, with 73.5% stating that they would not recommend a career in farming, and encouraging their children to find employment in a different industry (ibid: 161). Contrastingly, almost

all respondents in this study stated that they would recommend a career in farming to their offspring.

> I'd kick their backsides into it as quick as I could (Farm Worker 14)

> I would […] because it's in the blood. I would recommend (Farmer 12)

Possible reasons for this shift might be the move away from the poor conditions associated with tied cottages, overall improvement in conditions of pay, and the expressive aspects of farm work such as the continued intrinsic satisfaction resulting from the work itself.

Only Farm Worker 7 stated an outright aversion to the idea of recommending farming to one's children.

> No. If you could get a better job, you'd get a better job wouldn't you? (Farm Worker 7)

This particular farm worker was one of the oldest participants (70-80 years old) and had lived and worked his entire life on one holding working for the same family. His answer is representative of those given by Newby's workers in the 70s and perhaps results from a sentiment of having been constrained over a lifetime due to poor occupational mobility options under a paternalistically organised work regime.

Newby's farm workers also showed a lower incidence of the likelihood they would choose agriculture as a career if given the chance again, at a rate of 55% (ibid: 160). Again, farm labour contributors in this study were almost unanimous in stating that if they were to start again, knowing what they know now, they would most likely choose the same career path again. Caveats expressed by many were linked to their level of education where a small proportion of respondents wished that they had extended their education beyond secondary school.

> I would do, but I woulda, what I wish I did do now is studied a bit more, gone to college or something, farm college for a few years and got a good few qualifications, even though I know I can do it, you still need that bit a paper nowadays so you can do it, don't you (Farm Worker 10)

> Yes. I think my biggest regret was not going to college (Farmer 10)

Farm Worker 3 expressed a contrasting opinion, doubting the usefulness of her further education qualifications in her current position.

> Yeah. I wouldn't have done my A-levels, I don't think. If I knew I could get to where I am now without them, I would never have done them at college I don't think

The role of further education in capability creation will be examined further in sections 9.3.1.5 and 9.3.1.6.

9.1.4.1 The Farming Disease

Wuthnow (2015) explores the 'in the blood' narrative of intergenerational farming in the US farming community, and recognises that continuity is not merely dependent on economic considerations, rather referring to 'the meanings and values that get passed on from generation to generation' (ibid: 14). In line with understandings of networks in previous chapters, Wuthnow perceives how the desire for an occupation in farming is also linked to past, tradition, social relations and identity.

Although the majority of respondents agree that there was no explicit lack of choice in their decision to work in farming, many inadvertently suggested that farm work is inherent to their identity, and therefore dictates choice by default. Farming being 'in the blood' is a common narrative of the farmer and farm worker script. The underlying reason for this pattern of occupational identity is likely to be early socialisation into farming (Sachs 1973).

> I was born in the countryside, bought up on, like I said, a small, we only had two acres or so. And I think it is just *born in you* really. That outdoors, whatever. But I can't actually pin down why (Contractor 4)

> [Did you feel like you were expected to go into farming by the family?] No [No? It was fairly open?] Yeah. I think I was that keen *naturally* to do it (Contractor 5)

> I had no real intention ever of sort of being a dairy farmer, um, my grandfather was, I guess it's kind of *genetic*, but my folks weren't milking cows (Farm Worker 1)

> They say *it's in the blood*. I dunno, it's a bit clichéd to say it but there's definitely something in it. Like, you can't, if you like it you like it. You can't leave it really (Farm Worker 5)

> Farming is a disease. It's either *in your blood*, or it's not *in your blood* (Farmer 17)

One farm worker referred to their occupational choice as 'natural progression', even though it involved going to work on a farm not associated with the family farm.

> We were brought up on the farm and working on it from when we were very young, so it was sort of a bit of a natural progression to carry on farming really, it's what I wanted to do, I mean, yeah, both my brother and myself both had opportunities to perhaps go and do other things but that's what we wanted to do so, that's what we did (Farm Worker 2)

Farm worker 14 implies that any obstruction to submitting fully to the farming disease incites negative life consequences.

> I've done a lot of building trade things but, but, farming never goes out of your blood. No matter what you are, it's in there. And, some people they let it go, they don't follow it, and that's what I did. I might have been a proper little farmer now, if I'd have carried on with it when I was…but, the town life. We moved from the country into the town and as soon as I hit the town life that was troublesome (Farm Worker 14)

Both farm work and rural living represent, for Farm Worker 14, a lifescape whereby an inherent moral code distinct from the of urban living is beneficial to behavioural wellbeing.

A farming background proved more important than gender for some respondents, a marked change from fifty years ago.

> If I had another woman that was keen to do it, yeah I would, yeah definitely, yeah. I mean, [Worker G], as far as ranking between let's say one out of ten…I'd put her in the top three. That's her driving there (points to a photo). She's a bloody good operator. But then she was brought up on a farm, so (Contractor 8)

The continuation of the 'farming disease' script amongst all generations rubs slightly against the freedom to choose ideology that has become manifest in the modern farm labour contributor's lifescape, denoting a lack of choice rather than total independence.

Farm labour contributors stemming from a farming family develop, through socialisation and work experience on the home farm, a significant set of capacities which set them up for a life of work in farming. Identity, attitudes and an understanding of what the lifescape of a farmer, farm worker or contractor entails enables a sense of preparedness. But these capacities alone are not sufficient for the requirements of the occupation. Knowledge and skill acquired through a variety of means, contribute to the FLC's capacities and, therefore, opportunities. But different meanings and understandings attached to these terms are, according to interview respondents,

contributing to a mismatch between various active agents in the networks of the farm labour contributor.

9.2 Knowledge and Skill

The role and value of knowledge in the workplace is a pertinent factor of consideration from both the point of view of capacity development and of opportunity advancement. By developing an appreciation of how farm labour contributors, especially farmers, value different types of knowledge, the process of matching or failure to match capacities can be understood further.

Chapter three introduced the terms ‘techne’ and ‘metis’ (Scott 1998) to describe different types of knowledge that can be applied to agricultural practices. Although the terms ‘techne’ and ‘metis’ were not familiar to respondents, when probed as to the importance of different types of knowledge, the distinction between the two was largely perceived as clear.

Farm worker 2 believes that metis and techne are of equal value in the agricultural workplace.

> It’s interesting that people, I’ve seen it since I’ve been here in the last 12 months, that youngsters have come out of college or out of studies, really well-educated, but there’s a massive learning curve once you get onto individual farms. Every individual farm works different and takes different techniques on land and things as well, so you know, soil types and terrain and things like that. So yeah, I think it’s equally important that you get a basic knowledge of it all and then you gotta, through experience, do the rest of it (Farm Worker 2)

Farmer 15, on the other hand, suggests that without a lineage of knowledge being passed from generation, a possibility exists that ‘local’ knowledge will be lost.

> If you don’t encourage young people and give them the benefits and help them to do and be a success in it, then it’s just gonna come down to the fact, you know, once the older guys in the next ten years retire, it’s gonna be a very sad thing that there are gonna be more and more and more farmers gone, with no youngsters actually having the knowledge to do any of it (Farm worker 15)

Knowledge that is passed down for a particular region, soil, or type of farming is, according to some workers, less possible to learn in a universal manner, from textbooks or by standardised instruction.

> You have to do that initial out of the books learning, to give you an overview of what's going on. But you've gotta have that experience [local]. There's no supplement for it. And the biggest problem with it is it takes quite a long time to get that experience. I'd say at least, at least, it's gonna take you at least five years to get a base knowledge of what's going on really. Um, I think that's where farmer's sons get their leg up because they're, it's sort of being introduced, drip-fed into them all their life. They're don't really realise they're taking it on board. Whereas anybody from outside who wants to come into agriculture, it's a very steep learning curve (Farm Worker 17)

> The knowledge of soil type on a farm and how it reacts to different cultivations or different weather patterns, you're never gonna learn that until you're here. I think. Well, you might learn the theory of what's meant to happen, but you know, the practice you need to experience it. Because it changes every year almost. So there's an element of that local knowledge which is important (Farmer 14)

Farmer 1 showed a preference for local knowledge, citing the grazing system of the farm as the reason for this. Such knowledge is of higher value to him than universal knowledge, or that which is provided in educational institutions.

> We very much look for that local knowledge, that knowledge of kiwi grazing, so in terms of what you would learn in school and everything else, that just gives you a background. But if we had two candidates and one had local and one didn't, then I would go for the local definitely (Farmer 1)

The distinction between experience and local knowledge appeared blurry for some respondents, an understandable dilemma considering the dichotomy of thinking about knowledge from a dualistic perspective. In segregating 'local' knowledge from 'universal' knowledge and consequently donning a particular attribute to one or the other, what actually constitutes a type of knowledge can become ambiguous. According to Murdoch and Clark (1994), local knowledge is 'characteristically, related to "use" rather than the standardised categorisation criteria derived from science' (ibid: 125), thus experiential is equal to local knowledge.

Certain vocabulary triggered a response amongst the respondents which, if phrased differently might have incited more reflective answers. 'Formal qualifications' proved such a trigger and seemed to nestle in comfortably amongst other established scripts, especially amongst older farmers.

Discussions regarding the efficacy of training within contemporary educational establishments related to agriculture, detailed below in section 9.3.1.3, reveal how many farmers still place more value on experience, or tacit knowledge, than on formal qualifications.

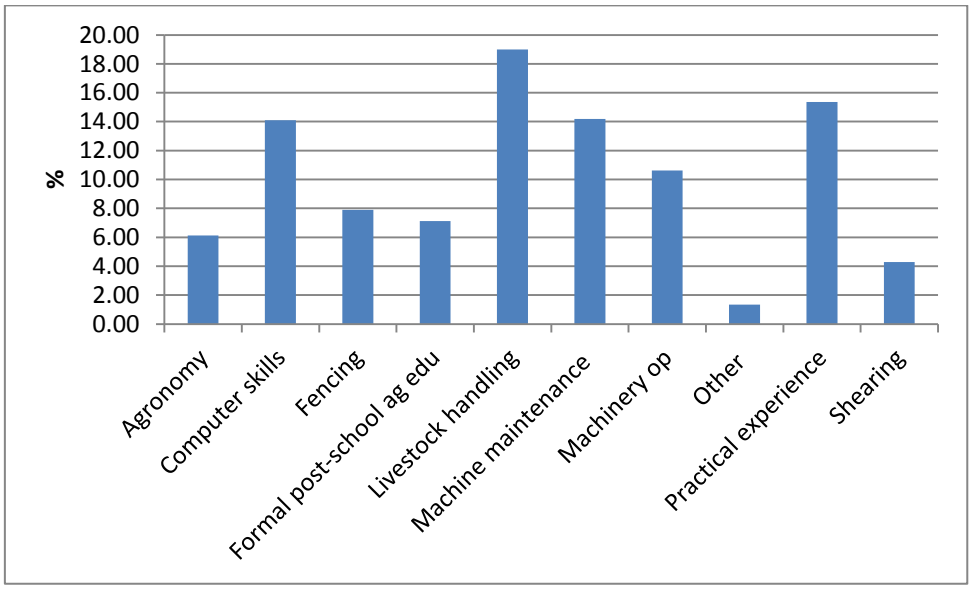

Figure 9.4. Proportion of farmers surveyed wishing to see more of these skills in the workplace (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

Quantitative results show that amongst those surveyed, practical experience proved to be the second most sought after skill by employers looking to recruit.

> [Would you go for experience over qualifications?] Yes, yes, yep (Farm Worker 17)

The survey revealed that computer skills were the fourth most sought after skill out of all farmers who responded to this question in the survey. However, interview data suggests that individuals were less likely to be employed based on information technology skills alone.

> It's making sure the IT you're using on the farm is suitably matched […] They're farming. They're probably farming partly because they're good with animals. You wouldn't put an IT worker on a farm because the IT requirements are high. You'd rather have an animal person (Farm Worker 1)

At the same time, farmers admitted that IT skills were appealing to them due to their own gap in knowledge.

> I'm lagging behind now with the IT. I don't know if you know how much technology there is in tractors now (Farmer 13)

However, some of the younger farm workers stated their recognition that formal qualifications are more relevant than ever. They indicate that this is a result of the changing requirements of the farming industry.

> I feel like now you've gotta be more qualified to do it. I noticed that, for a few of the jobs that I applied for to come over here, they all required some sort of agricultural certificate or degree or something, um, and I think you've gotta have a little bit of know-how, you can't just come in and milk some cows and drive a tractor. I think you've just gotta know why you would do things in a certain way, and I think that's really important because as the farming, like the agricultural industry becomes more and more important, you want people who are clued-up (Farm Worker 4)

> I think it's gonna become harder for people, like, there's gonna be more criteria you've gotta meet. Because now, there's more technology on farms, there's more precision stuff. It's not just a case of can you work a pitch fork, yeah, you're hired. So yeah, I think people will start asking for qualifications and start using references, and people are gonna want to know what you can do before they hire you. Instead of just looking at you and thinking, you're a big strong lad, you can work (Farm Worker 5)

Addicott (2016) addresses concerns that satellite technologies 'will come to commodify the traditional, local knowledge' possessed by farm labour contributors, transforming it into 'data inputs' (ibid: 172). He argues that, rather than perpetuate the metabolic rift predicted by Marx; an increasing alienation between human and nature, that qualitative research into satellite farming 'reveals quite the opposite' (ibid: 172). New technologies require more sophisticated understandings and knowledge of the ecological functioning of their holding.

Regarding the South West of England, Addicott reveals that this region lags behind other agricultural areas of the UK, such as the east of England, with only 15% of farmers using GPS systems against 39% in the east. He attributes this to the difference in average farm size in each area (average farm size in the east of England is 118 ha, whereas in the South West it is 70 ha (Defra 2017c), as well as to differences in geographical terrain, 'the rolling hills and valleys of the South West tend to block the radio frequencies required to achieve such levels of accuracy' (ibid: 187). Interview results corroborated this in my research and this might be one reason why so many farmers still rate experience over more scientific knowledge and qualifications. Equally, it might be argued that those respondents who do use the most up-to-date, technical

equipment proportionally are contractors, therefore displacing any potential need for transitions from one type of knowledge to another.

Farm workers and contractors in this region are yet to report anything similar to Szabo's (2013) findings that automated precision agriculture 'can induce new forms of stress due to information overload, skill degradation, boredom, complacency and over-reliance on the system' (ibid: 18).

Of course, what constitutes 'skilled labour' to a farmer, a farm worker or a contractor might not tally with more official perceptions of agricultural work, a discrepancy brought up myriad times in discussions around farm labour requirements. Contractor 7 demonstrates this effectively in the summing up of how he perceives himself with regards to education and skill.

> I'm not the best of readers and writers […] I left school without a qualification to my name [Really? That's unusual] I can't even spell. I can't even read me own name half the time [But would you consider yourself in what you do, how would you describe your skill level?] Me skill level I would say is as good as anybody who can read or write [But in terms of your job would you say you were pretty highly skilled?] I'd say I'm fairly highly skilled at it, yep (Contractor 7)

Older workers described how, as more machinery was introduced into their lifescapes, there existed a need to upskill. Previously, this new skill acquisition might have been accrued through 'common sense', a quality cited myriad occasions during discussions around desirable or essential qualities required by farmers/contractors in their workers.

> It just come to us. Common sense. Watch what you're doing […] You train yourself, young lady (Contractor 1)

> Use your common sense […] You just pick it up as you go along. You learn it day by day (Farm Worker 16)

The need to upskill for new machinery and technologies in more recent years has proven to be an issue, especially for the older respondents. Contractor 3, who works for his father, describes how he has had to take over some of the tasks due to his father's inability or unwillingness to upskill.

> Trouble is, the new stuff now's got computers in it. Father don't like computers. He don't know what to do when something goes wrong (Contractor 3)

> I think the thing that I find potentially most difficult, I don't know that I don't enjoy it, but it's the technical side of things, as in, now things go along quite electronic

> and computerised and stuff and maybe at my age, in my early 50s then, at school and stuff I didn't learn it, so it's sort of catching up and trying to get up with that side of things (Farm Worker 2)

> Everything, it is getting really complicated, cos you've got all this guidance now [Yeah. How do you find that?] Yeah, it's alright. Takes a bit of getting used to sometimes [And how do you learn, when you get a new piece of machinery, how do you learn to use it?] The manufacturer usually comes out and they'll train you (Contractor 6)

> Our older employee who's been there for ages. He can't work the computer screen that's, you know, he just doesn't have that ability. And we've tried, and he'll, oh yes yes I know what to do. And actually he doesn't, so yeah. It's really difficult (Farmer 13)

The suggestion here is that the inability to upskill might compromise the position of trust between a worker and their employer, where a worker's discomfort tied to lack of skill encourages a behaviour of denial. This links to status acquisition and certainly several farm labour contributors across all cohorts were obviously ambiguous as to their skill levels with new technology or machinery when queried. Developments in mechanisation and technology therefore impede upon the well-being of some older workers, by limiting the freedoms available to them. Tasks which previously individuals were able to execute become inaccessible to them, therefore distorting the match between their capacities and opportunities, a shift especially identifiable when viewed through the lens of the Human Capability Framework.

Farmer 14 compares the technical abilities of older workers to younger workers, finding the oldest member of staff lacking in several areas, machinery operation being one of them. An inability to upskill can be disempowering to a worker who has already been committed to a lifelong career in agriculture.

> He does struggle sort of with the newer technology where the newer lads, the younger lads, are more brought up with it and are more au fait with it. Yeah. [Is he always willing to give it a shot though?] Yeah. Pretty well. But I think sometimes it's just too much for him to understand (Farmer 14)

Contractors particularly expressed the difference in machinery operation, outlining how not only was machinery more technical and thus, required more skill to operate, but how the cost of that machinery necessitated a more particular and thorough vetting process of new recruits for insurance and assurance purposes.

> It's such high value and for peace of mind you've gotta have the right person. You've gotta be happy that the guys, you know, they could be driving out the yard with two hundred and fifty grands worth of machinery. And it's all on my insurance so if they have an accident, yeah, blah blah blah. But it's not only that, it's the down time and what sort of accident they have because it's big, heavy lumps of machinery and you could drive over a fully grown human being and you wouldn't even know it, it's so big. And it's a very responsible job and also the job in hand that they're doing has gotta be done correct, and it can cost a business a lot of money if it goes wrong (Contractor 8)

> You can't really call it tractor driving now. 'Tis an operator, because it's quite technical stuff (Contractor 6)

This perception was echoed by the farmers who owned expensive machinery.

> The equipment is so expensive, we can't just put anyone on it. It has to be someone who understands what they're doing and understands and respects that, you know, we've got a lot of money tied up in it (Farmer 14)

The cost of machinery creates an additional stressor in the workplace, and one respondent admitted resorting to violence when an employee mishandled a piece of machinery.

> I've never fired anybody. I've punched a couple out and then they've just left [Really? Is that after they've done something silly?] Seriously stupid, yeah […] Absolutely nuts. Wrote a tractor off once […] Yapping on the that thing (points to phone) when they shouldn't be [That's what it was?] Yeah. Total loss, thirty forty grand [Wow] Yeah. So, I just lost my cool. Bang [And has that happened a few times, I don't mean punching them but…] No, it's only happened twice. I mean, Christ almighty, I haven't had it on a plate. I mean, I've worked bloody hard (ID withheld)

Contractor 6's responses implied that rapid developments in technology had become a constraint for him in his lifescape, revealing a further personal discord.

> The biggest problem I've always got is that if you can't do it, you can't expect nobody else to do it […] That's always been my motto (Contractor 6)

Contractor 8, the owner of a large contracting firm, also partially admitted that he was unable to keep up with some of his other members of staff in terms of machinery operation.

> [Employee B] drives a machine that I don't drive. I won't. And I drive pretty well everything, but I don't drive his tractor, because it's his tractor. Well, it's mine, buts it's his. I don't drive it [Why not?] I don't need to. He drives it. Um, it's got all of this GPS stuff which, I can use it, but I choose not to cos I've got enough else to do (Contractor 8)

A further skill increasingly required by all types of farm labour contributor, but particularly the contractor, is that of *assembly*. Felstead et al (2005) refer to assembly as the 'planned sequencing of space and time in the execution of work tasks' (ibid: 19). Assembly skills are particularly important to geographically remote workscapes or those where transitions between sites are required. Unpredictability and uncertainty sporadically force workers to adjust, cancel or make new plans due to either the requirements of the customer, the weather, or unanticipated emergencies. This process of 'responding to disruptions of, and interruptions to, planned sequences of space and time' is referred to as *repair* (ibid: 19) and requires a type of knowledge, skill and attitude that allows a worker to 'communicate in and transmit information through plural workscapes' (ibid: 19).

So attitudes towards knowledge and skill vary amongst the different cohorts, and age also appears to play a role in these differences. Older farm labour contributors both struggle with new machinery and technology whilst at the same time appearing to value practical experience over formal qualifications. There appears to be no clear method of measuring 'skill' in the agricultural workplace due to the disparity between metis and techne, or the apparent inability to combine the two to provide optimum capability functioning.

9.3 Opportunities

The decline in the number of farm workers since the advent of the industrial revolution has been referred to on myriad occasions prior to this section, and Chapter Two revealed that this decline has now halted, according to Defra's figures (2017d). Anticipated changes in labour use in the next five years, as demonstrated by the survey, suggest that vacancies for farm labour contributors are likely to rise, creating new opportunities for individuals wishing to partake in farm work. Possible reasons for a decrease in contractor use are the intention to move out of farming, planned purchase of own machinery, or a planned change in farm type or size. However, a key finding of this research is the increasing lack of ease in finding skilled labour by those 1251 farmers surveyed in the South West.

Initial figures regarding the availability of labour demonstrate a significant difference between three different types of labour; seasonal, contract, and skilled. The results

demonstrate that 78% of farmers and land managers in the South West, to whom it was applicable, either agree or strongly agree with the statement that 'I can always find contractors when required', whilst seasonal and especially skilled labour proves more difficult to come by (Figure 9.5). In particular, 38% of all responding farms to the statement, 'I can always find skilled labour when required' stated that they either disagreed of strongly disagreed.

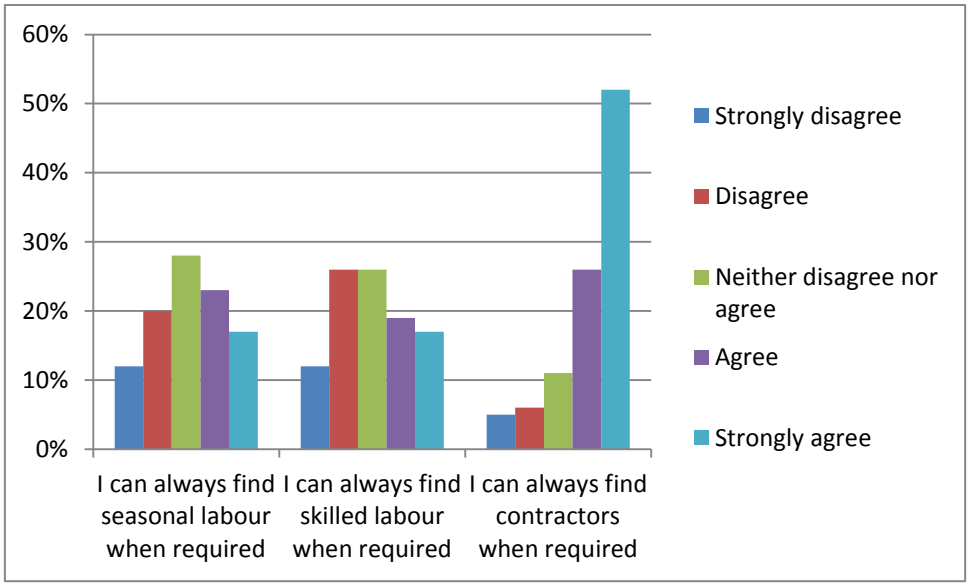

Figure 9.5. Farmers' perceived availability of three different labour cohorts (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

There exists a higher incidence of difficulty in finding skilled labour amongst dairy, horticulture, and mixed farming systems, and on holdings between 100 and 250 hectares in size (Figure 9.6).

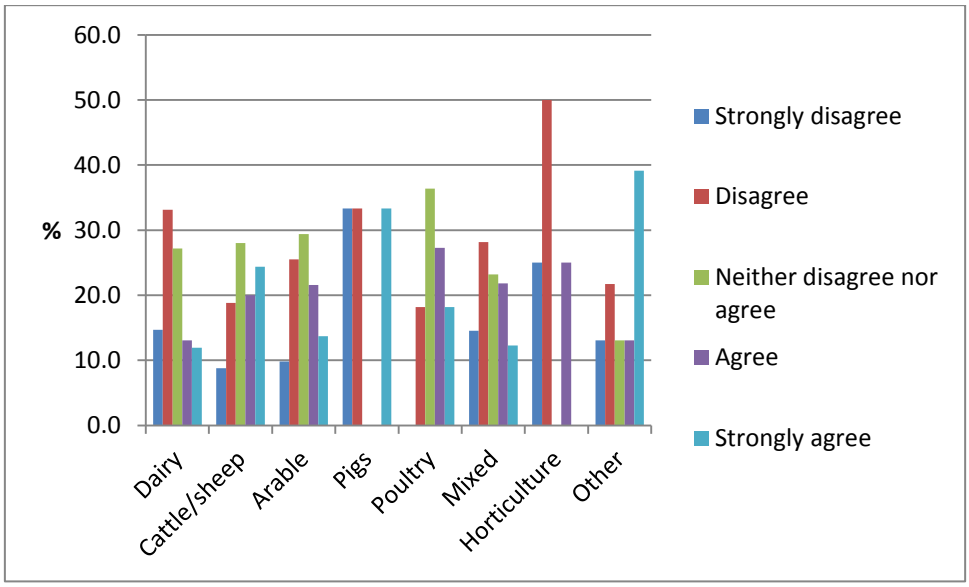

Figure 9.6. Extent to which farmers agree with the statement 'I can always find skilled labour when required' by farm type (%) (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

Qualitative interviews with farmers corroborated these findings. In fact, half of the farmers agreed that they were finding it increasingly more difficult to find skilled labour.

> I'm looking for a chap to freeze brand cattle at the moment, do you know what I mean? And really, my relief milker, I'm sure they're out there, but finding the right one is always difficult (Farmer 7)
>
> [And can you always find people for what you need?] No (Farmer 5)
>
> [What would you say your main problem, issue is with regards to labour on your holding?] Skilled labour (Farmer 13)

One farmer described how the availability of good quality workers was so dire that they felt an urgency to 'carry' workers if they appeared, even if a position wasn't currently available.

> There's very few people around at the moment. Usually they're like buses they come at the wrong time. You have to carry them then. They're worth carrying if you can find them […] Good people are tough to find (Farmer 20)

Another farmer offered a salary of £22,000, plus a house, a package which was advertised in the Farmer's Weekly. Farmer 13 stated that, in spite of what she considered to be 'quite a good package' they were unable to find anybody.

Only one farmer described the availability of workers in terms of their being 'quite a few'. Farmer 14, up until recently, described how 'there seems to have been a bit of a void of that until quite recently' but attributes a sudden flux of workers to 'a fluke' rather than a likelihood of cultural change.

Interestingly, this shortage of labour appears to also extend to contracting firms who employ workers.

> We struggle to find quality people. I always get people ring up. And you can virtually tell, you know, the way the conversation comes across from them, that they just wanna drive a tractor. Well, to get high quality, like that guy out there, he can drive anything. To get people like him's difficult. And when you get 'em you gotta pay 'em a lot of money (Contractor 8)

The ability to retain suitable farm workers also revealed itself to be a challenge for a number of farmers.

> Our problem is keeping people. It's a real problem (Farmer 1)
>
> I know people we know and they're nice people, but they've had like, in a couple of weeks, they've had five apprentices (Farmer 2)

Labour shortages in agriculture are not a new phenomenon. Newby discusses early labour shortages in agriculture in England, 'since the early 1960s, when, for almost the first occasion in peacetime, there appeared to be long term shortages in some categories of labour, particularly those possessing a high degree of skill in certain sectors like stock-breeding' (1977:147). Investigative approaches mentioned by Newby deal with the problem from a 'drift from the land' perspective, rather than the perspective now required which is 'drift to the land'. Attracting new entrants into an industry unknown to them might be much more difficult than preventing already existing members of an industry from leaving; out-migration rather than in-migration. Reasons for leaving agriculture in Newby's day were given as the pay, hours, lack of prospects and local amenities, rural isolation and living conditions (ibid:149). New themes have arisen from qualitative data which demonstrate a scale of opportunity constraints that, according to respondents, contribute to the current labour shortage and labour retention crisis. These constraints fall into one of three categories; farm-level constraints; local-level constraints; and national-level constraints (Figure 9.7). If vacancies are likely to increase in the future and suitable skilled labour proves lacking, the sustainability of farms in the South West could be at risk from a decrease in worker availability.

9.3.1 Career Pathways: Blocks and Constraints

9.3.1.1 Farm-Level Constraints

Low pay proved a common response when respondents were queried as to possible reasons for labour shortages in agriculture generally.

> It goes back to money and I think it goes back to the fact that, you know, in those days people didn't make a lot of money out of farming but they lived and they ate and they had a freedom and an independence and the thing is that nobody made much money out of anything and everybody was happy just to be able to pay the rent and have their groceries and things like that. So, and I think even when we were growing up, that's the same thing, you know, you had a standard of living which was good. And, but now that's changed and your standard of living is taken for granted and it's all about, you know, surplus cash and whether you've got enough cash to pay your gym membership or go on three holidays a year, and I think that farming, because it's producing a raw

Figure 9.7. Constraints to career pathway opportunities in farming according to respondents

> material, that's been left behind. And my daughter, going, she works for a travel agents down in Exeter, she's earning a lot of money. Ok, on the grand scheme of things, it isn't very much, but considering what you earn on a farm, it's a lot of money. And I've got nephews, my nephew's 22 and he's working in London and he's sort of earning £40,00 and we could never make that profit out of keeping as many cattle as we do. It doesn't work, so it's really just the fact that, you know, you've lost that financial reward. So, you're not, the best guys are not gonna be farm workers, are they? (Farmer 16)

However, probes into individual reasons for working in agriculture revealed that pay and conditions proved only partially responsible for worker satisfaction.

> I'd happily do it for less money, because money isn't everything. What's everything, is actually, if you're gonna do a job like this, you have to do it where your family and everyone around you can feel like it's worth it (Farm Worker 15)

Instead, failures in people management and lack of incentivisation at farm level was voiced by many as contributing heavily to worker dissatisfaction and holding the industry back in improving the image of agriculture as a career. The farm culture on some farms was described as antiquated, restrictive and lacking adequate people management capacities. This provides an example of where a lack of capacities on the part of the farmer impedes upon the opportunities available to the farm worker which, according to the Human Capability Framework, prevents an effective and balanced matching process.

9.3.1.2 Farm Culture

People Management

Four elements that surfaced repeatedly in discussions of desired people management capacities on the part of the employer were communication, recognition, allocation of interesting tasks and opportunities for personal progression.

> The job's really dull, I'm afraid. It's like factory work. It's just a cog in a wheel. I don't have to do any thinking (Farm Worker 11)

> It's amazing just how much of an effect a bad leader or a bad manager can have on people, on their morale and mindset. Happy people enjoy their work, they put their heart and soul into it. They're better, you know, cos they want to find things like mastitis in cows. You know, they want to spot it. They wanna go the extra mile for each other. And a lot of that, they talk about like, you know,

> you can have a bad apple in a barrel but it's actually the leader of that place that builds the barrel (Farm Worker 11)

Another factor brought up by both workers and a farmer was the return of the successor to the family farm after a period away via one of the indirect routes mentioned in section 9.1.2. A worker could transition quickly from being satisfied with their job and tasks allocated to them, to very dissatisfied when the returning successor monopolises all of the tasks previously most interesting to the hired worker, leaving them with the remaining tasks that are considered less fulfilling.

> You do have to try and encourage young people to do stuff. And I know, this is going to sound bad, I know a lot of young people don't want to do anything anymore. But it's like [our apprentices] we try and let them do everything. You don't just say, oh that's your job, you can fork troughs out all day. I know [Farm Worker x] was saying to me the other day, when he was foot trimming, he'd go round farms and they'd say oh, the apprentice is useless, he isn't interested, and they're paying him like £2.10 an hour, which is all you legally have to pay them. And they're doing all the skivvy work that no one else wants to do. Because the farmer's son's doing what he wants to do, and it's like, well I don't wanna do that, but you can. And then, oh, he doesn't seem interested. And it's like, well, why is he not interested? Because you're giving him all the crap that no one else wants to do. So that's why he's not interested, and you're paying him £2.10 an hour to do it. So why would he do it, when he could go down MacDonalds being paid, I dunno, £5/6/7 an hour. I know it's not a career is it, but it's money, which everyone at the end of the day, does sort of need (Farmer 2)

> I've gone from doing all the organising and everything myself to his very young son trying to come into all this, and it's very difficult for a young lad to do it, you know, with trying to have the understanding as well. And then you're trying to deal with the boss, the boss's son, and then trying to do your own job that you've done for so many years before. It makes it very difficult (Farm Worker 15)

Expectations for the farmer to lead by example existed amongst workers. Farm Worker 5 decided to leave one place of employment due to his employer having 'no ambition or anything'. He expressed an expectation that the boss should be 'the first one up and the last one in at night' yet at the previous two places of employment, this hadn't been the case.

> It's not nice to hound people anyway, and the last person you wanna be phoning up is your boss, finding out where he is. So yeah [Is that something that's happened to you in the past?] Yeah, with the last two farms, have been. I'd get there a good couple of hours before I see anybody (Farm Worker 5)

He expressed a sense of contentment at his subsequent place of employment due to his employers having 'a clear view of what they want' because it 'just sort of gives you something that you know you're working towards'.

Farm workers revealed having left a place of employment due to poor allocation of tasks by the farmer, usually of the most boring, repetitive jobs.

> He wouldn't even come in the same room as me really. Just stay out the way. I thought, I can't do my job if I don't know what you want me to do. So, I just couldn't stick it anymore […] That's part of the reason I left the job in [local town] in the beginning, because it just, I didn't feel like I'd done anything. I finished work at half past four and I was just bored (Farm Worker 5)

Farm Worker 5 could effectively exercise his freedom to return to the labour market in search of an employment situation which proved more beneficial to him, demonstrating the holistic essence of the Human Capability Framework which states how the capabilities accessed by an actor are rarely about influencing economic production alone. This worker's advantages in terms of opportunities were lowered by poor farm culture, inhibiting his ability to achieve a day's work which he had reason to value. But by returning to the labour market, he increased his potential to heighten both his capabilities and his opportunities, increasing his likelihood of greater overall well-being.

Being shown appreciation for hard work proved of high importance to some farm labour contributors, including employers of contracting firms as well as farmers to hired workers.

> It was fairly long hours, which I wanted to do but we didn't really get the thanks for doing it (Contractor 5)

Farm Worker 15 believes that appreciation is more important than economic factors.

> I think when you're young […] that probably money is everything, possibly. But I think after that, I think it's more about being content and feeling valued, and what you do in work is for a good cause and for a reason (Farm Worker 15)

This might include customer feedback, where an employer enables a link between farm worker and customer, a rarer occurrence in contemporary agriculture as production and consumption are rarely contained within the local anymore:

> We get emails saying we won such and such an award for the [product] and things like that […] That's good feedback (Farm Worker 1)

Opportunities for personal progression and giving more agency to the worker is recognised by some of the employing farmers interviewed.

> I think that's more open than it used to be. You never used to look for staff comment on, you know, that side, in our days as it were. They were just told what to do and if they were keen, you'd try and educate them a bit but you wouldn't look for their input really. So that has changed (Farmer 5)

> It's more proactive. Because it's so difficult to get staff these days, so if you've got decent staff you try and encourage them these days to bring the best out in them, you know. And I think that's important because it isn't easy to get staff (Farmer 5)

Often, farmers agreed with the farm workers in general. Farmer 6 echoes Farm Worker 5 in outlining what they perceive to be the 'key to a happy workforce'.

> Communication, a bit of job satisfaction, feeling like there's a bit of ownership and a decent pay packet (Farmer 6)

> Pay 'em fairly. Let them know that they're wanted,. You gotta speak to 'em as if they actually have a place there, and just, you've gotta work with 'em (Farm Worker 5)

9.3.1.3 Training

The Farm Survey data revealed whether farmers employing agricultural labour had any intention to change the level of training offered to their employees over the next year. Results suggest that the majority of farmers are unlikely to make any changes to the levels of training offered to their staff over the coming year, a fact which interview results suggests could be highly detrimental to the availability levels of farm workers in the near future (Figure 9.8).

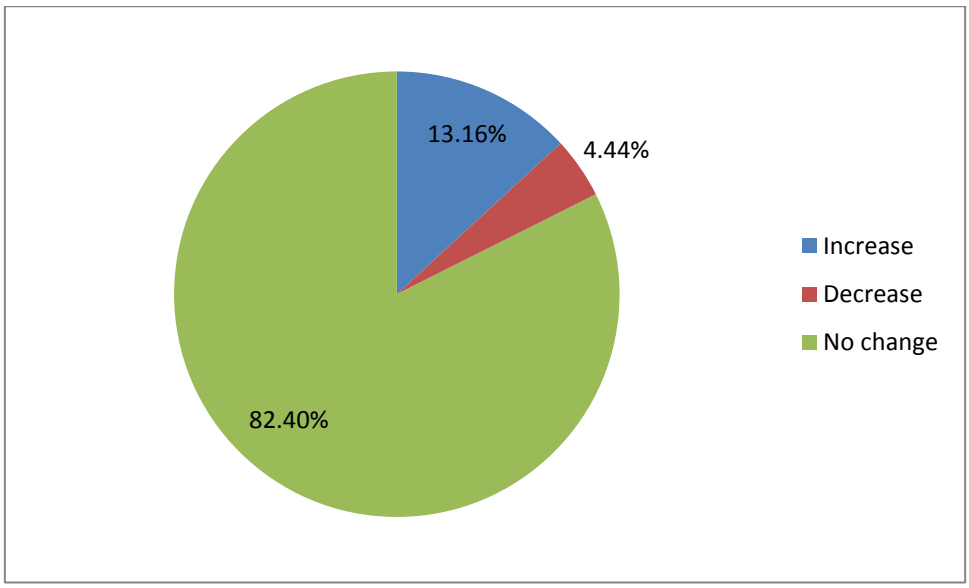

Figure 9.8. Proportion of farmers planning to change their levels of staff training over the next year (*Source*: South West Farm Survey)

A key dichotomy that presented itself during this research is how a farmer might require labour on their farm, yet few are keen or able to provide the training required to attain the necessary skills to be able to fill that labour gap.

Farmer 13 at once stated how 'it is a real problem to try and get really good farm workers' but follows this statement saying;

> The trouble is that we can do the job so much better than somebody else. And it then becomes frustrating because you ask them to do the job and then you realise they don't do it properly, so you need to be more specific about what you asked them to do, without being offensive […] it becomes incredibly frustrating and you think, in the end, I'll do it myself. Because, I can do it properly and quickly and you know that it's done. So, we end up taking on more and more and more and more (Farmer 13)

Although there is a need and an opportunity for another individual to come on to the holding to assist with labour requirements, some farmers actively choose to take on extra work not simply because the workers aren't available but also because they are unwilling to train new workers. Farmer 13 admitted that this tended towards casual staff rather than permanent skilled labour and attributed this change in culture to advancements in technology.

> One of the reasons we've gone a little bit away from harvest students is, as well, again, down to the technology and the tractors because some of the tractors that we've got, you cannot now put, not a novice even, but somebody

> with a reasonable amount of experience. You can't put them on that tractor […] And that's our choice and that's the type of tractors that we have. Not everybody does that. You know, people still have a tractor as a tractor, but basically the technology in them is just going…[Is it the tractor itself or is it new software?] It's how you drive it, yeah. So the tractors are driven by the software and if you don't know how to operate that software you can't drive the tractor (Farmer 13)

Where learning of farm tasks in the past was more intuitive, or developed from an early age helping out on farms, as Contractor 1 described, 'you train[ed] yourself', rapid developments in technology and machinery, and the cost of new machinery, require a new kind of learning and experience to prevent capital damage and loss. But by being less willing to take on students, farmers can exacerbate the lack of experience issues that so many complain about.

Farmers 3 and 17, on the other hand, approach the lack of experience in students more congenially.

> Students are different because you have to look at them a lot. You kinda gotta do it like this, and then you have to show them again because they're doing it wrong. But it's fine. You're kind of half worried about what they're gonna muck up. But they've gotta learn somehow so don't get me wrong, you know. It's nice to have that […] as long as someone's enthusiastic and willing to work (Farmer 3)

> You've got to offer more training. And training which is apprenticeships and things of that nature, which are worthwhile (Farmer 17)

The general lack in on and off-farm training is recognised as a cultural problem.

> We could, as a farm, we could find more training and do more training […] It's a culture thing, isn't it. If you find all those training courses and set the ball rolling and say, well, you employ someone. We might as well do one day a month and send him off on a training course. I've done a quad bike one and a few bits and bobs, but we haven't got a culture to do that. And I don't think there is a culture anywhere that does that in farming […] Which is a shame cos I've, in my last job, I saw the benefit of training. You know, non-stop training all the time. And, you know […] it's another motivator (Farm Worker 8)

One farm worker who had worked on the same farm since the age of 15 had received no provision from his employer for any off-farm training.

> I've never had any paid training [Do you not need it? Do you not need paid training to get certificates for spraying and all of that stuff?] I've done all that, I did all that, and I've paid for that myself [Oh really? He's not paid for anything?] No (Farm worker 15)

Farm Workers made it clear that the provision of training was an important incentive to their employment situation.

> I think it's good to keep, like, keep learning new skills so that you feel like you are progressing somehow (Farm Worker 13)

> The key to a happy workforce. Multiple…lining up all of the things you need in place. So, give them money every year, you know, give them an incentive, you know, at the end of shearing, or the end of lambing, give them a £200 bonus. You've done lambing this year, well done, there's ya bonus. You know, give them a company car. Training's key to it, you know, from my previous experience, non-stop training (Farm Worker 8)

> It's not all about farming. You know, going off the farm to learn things. Going on courses and stuff. Not just being stuck on the farm and that's it (Farm Worker 12)

The use of contractors for certain tasks removes a proportion of the need for farmers to pay for training, although contracting firms who employ are also responsible for the adequate training of their workers in the operation of machinery.

When probed about off-farm training, a tendency existed to blame external agents, such as colleges, training agencies or the state, the former to be examined further in section 9.3.1.2 below. Several farmers defended poor provision of training opportunities to time-constraints, but cost also featured highly in their reasoning.

> I would like to see, so all the legalised stuff, training that we have to do, I'd like to see that offered at a much cheaper rate. Because I think something like a quad bike test, that kind of training, is, the test is poor, the training's poor, quality-wise, what you have to do legally, and could be much better, and you pay through the nose for it (Farmer 20)

One farmer suggested that mandatory qualifications were not kept up to date on his farm due to cost.

> The problem is, everything needs a certificate these days. […] You know. For the JCB you're supposed to have a new certificate every five years. But they've

> been driving it for the last 25 years. It's like that. Yeah, so if something were to happen, yes, we'd be in the shit, but you can't go and go pay 200 quid every time. Cos none of these are cheap, and you just can't, you know, if you tick every box and then they bugger off anyway, what difference does it make? […] So you can't. You can only put so much into it (Farmer 3)

One of his farm workers had worked on his family farm for over fifty years, and it is to him whom he refers above, specifically pointing out a change in legislation which affected the rule of grandfather rights. This allowed older workers to continue spraying despite never having completed formal training or certification, but this was dropped in 2012 with the introduction of the European Union's Sustainable Use directive, making certification mandatory (Hamer 2015).

> We're responsible people yet we get no credibility for being responsible. So, I can't even put a guy on a quad bike with a spray system behind him who's done it for years and years. He can no longer go on that machine (Farmer 20)

> They're getting more strict on things, doing away with things like grandfather's rights where you, cos you're 60 and you've done it all your life, you could continue to do so, but now they're sort of doing away with that (Farmer 2)

> [Do you get training?] No. All I learned, I've learned meself [But, in terms of spraying and stuff like that, sometimes you've got to do] Yeah, I've done all a that [You've done all of that?] Yeah, been there [Ok. Good] Wouldn't be now a course, cos I 'aven't got a licence 'ave I? [For what?] Spraying and stuff like that [Cos you'd have to renew it?] Yeah. I never had a licence in the first place [Oh, you didn't have one in the first place?] Didn't 'ave one back then […] And they done away with, what do you call it, grandfather rights, or grandad rights […] They've done away with that now, 'aven't they […] Not very long ago was it? Scrapped that. So, I can't do none a that (Farm Worker 7)

Farmers and contractors also require training and although bodies exist to assist in training provision, as well as machinery manufacturers playing a key role in farmer's skill development, some farmers felt that not enough training provision existed for themselves.

> There used to be something called the Agricultural Training Board, which I felt used to do a really good job. Like, they'd come round on the farm and teach you skills. And there's none of that anymore. There used to be a lady come round and she used to say, [Farmer 7], what do you wanna be trained in? Do you wanna go and do your chainsaw training or do you wanna learn how to milk

> cows properly or do you wanna learn about masititis or stuff like that. And some of that stuff should be done by the levy bodies. I'm not sure it is done as well as it could be. So, I think there's a bit of that done by the levy bodies but they're, it's not quite enough. It's not quite in the right area I don't think. And that's what, that's the missing link if you know what I mean. Levy bodies are alright if you're hooked in them. Cos I can get onto loads of stuff like with them. But there's nobody who actually comes out on the farm. And I think there are lots of farmers falling through the net on that (Farmer 7)

9.3.1.4 The Failure to Match Capacities with Opportunities

Farm workers acknowledge the existence of labour shortages and deduce the reasons for it from personal experience. Farm Worker 5 describes a previous place of employment and why he left due to poor farm culture.

> My last boss, he still hasn't found anyone. And, I found his advert the other day online and it's ridiculous what he's offering now, just to try and find someone. When I told him I was leaving, he reckoned he was just gonna get some Europeans in to do it. He wasn't bothered about trying to find anyone qualified, he just wanted someone to do the work so that he could focus on the qualified stuff [So now he's offering what? He's offering more money or?] Slightly more money. But now he's offering a quarter of the milk cheque, a quarter of cow and calf sales, um, providing you invest a quarter of the costs towards it. So, you're basically taking a quarter of the profit. But, knowing the farm, I think you'd be nuts to do that, because I can't imagine there's much profit there. But yeah, I think he's trying to make it sound a hell of a lot better than it is just to try and get anybody in. He's offering the annexe next to his house. What else? [And he still hasn't found anybody?] No. No one (Farm Worker 5)

> Farmers just expect someone to turn up and be able to do the job. Well, that's not always the case. You need to actually put some thought and method into it. And farmers, to be honest, can be a bit guilty of not stepping back really. Can be a bit stuck in their ways. How I do it is always right, type thing, and if someone comes in and does it slightly differently, the end result might be not completely the same or even better, but if they're not willing to accept that, then they're gonna struggle (Farmer 8)

Another possible reason for mismatching occurring between capacities and opportunities at the farm level was alluded to in chapter six, whereby the preferred method of recruitment amongst most farmers participating in the postal survey is still that of informal contacts. This is certainly driven by financial constraints for some, with

farmers reporting that an advertisement in the Farmers Weekly potentially costs upwards of £1,000. But 'word of mouth' might also be another cultural hangover within the agricultural community which prevents adequate matching in the overall process.

Ultimately, farm culture can act as a significant opportunity constraint for farm labour contributors at all levels, not only potentially stifling the freedoms available to workers but also curtailing potential to accrue new and necessary capacities for their own satisfaction and career progression. This suggests a significant overhaul is required at farm level, as one respondent suggests:

> Some of these agricultural businesses have probably gotta look at themselves as them investing time in people, instead of the other way around' (Farmer 8)

9.3.1.5 Local-Level Constraints

On a slightly wider scale, changes occurring locally in the South West are cited by respondents as contributing further to opportunity constraints for new entrants to the industry. An important factor taken into consideration is the potential for small, family farms to act as a site of instruction. As Farmer 19 states, 'the big farms needs us small farms as a training ground'. Numbers of small farms have declined significantly over the last 100 years as larger farms have expanded due to either land purchase and/or inheritance (Winter and Lobley 2016). Winter and Lobley, in their study of small farms in the UK, determine that 'the loss of small farms, it is argued, is associated with fewer people on the land and fewer to play formal or informal roles in communities' (ibid: 5). Farmer 19 relates this to the small farm's role in informal agricultural training.

> The bigger farms […] rely on us livestock farmers and small farmers in the South West or Wales, or Ireland, or wherever, to start the children off on a little grey Fergie or small tractor and get all those skills' (Farmer 19)

There also exists a belief that this potential is becoming latent as young people are less likely to help out on farms due to health and safety regulations

> Farms are good places to employ kids. You can always find things for them to do. Bit dangerous and you have to be careful they don't chop their arms off, but that's just life (Farmer 16)

> I think it's sad that we don't have the children from [local town] anymore, because it's just too much trouble. You know, they all loved it. And you build up quite a working relationship with the teachers over the years, but you know when you get to the point where you have to pay more insurance having to provide shit loads of sinks and things like that. When I was a kid at […], we'd

> always go to someone's farm and that sort of thing. When our children were at primary school, the kids came up and they were followed round by their teacher with their first aid kit and they were only here for an hour because they had to have their lunch in the canteen and they had to be back at school to go home at three o clock, and they all had to wash their hands, so they had about half an hour, and then it was hand washing and then back on the bus because they couldn't be late home (Farmer 10)

The final route of family farm children, where total movement out of agriculture is the final occupational destination, was discussed earlier, and reasons for this movement might relate to pay, location, hours, benefits lack of prospects and/or personal development but, as Contractor 6 simply articulates it, 'all the farmers sons have disappeared'.

Interview data reveals that the gap between farming employers and potential employees might be exacerbated by career planning and headhunting occurring in agricultural colleges and universities. Various respondents alluded to the act of students being recruited by companies of agricultural research or products, such as Syngenta and Genus, before their courses end.

> The really skilled people, even at my time at university, they were being head-hunted before they'd even graduated' (Farmer 8)

> I think people want to work for companies more. Like I've got a friend who works for Genus, and that's all he wanted to do. And you know, people wanna work for feed companies and things like that. But it's all good and well having these feed companies, but if they've got no farms to supply, it's pointless (Farm Worker 5)

Other graduates of agricultural educational establishments were said to move straight into contracting, either as self-employed small businesses or by going to work for large contracting businesses, motivated by a preference for driving machinery over other farm-work tasks.

> There's not a lot of people my age that don't want to do anything other than drive tractors […] they all went off and worked for contractors and just lived for driving tractors 16 hours a day, so, that's all they wanted to do (Farm Worker 5)

The result of a further (re)division of labour where not only contractors provide an outsourced type of labour is that other agriculturally-related jobs, such as agronomy, replace more traditional forms of knowledge and take people away from working

directly upon the land and applying local, experiential knowledge, instead shifting a formulaic approach onto the land, as described by Scott (1998).

Agricultural Colleges

The attribution of responsibility for a gap in matching between employers and potential employees to the afore-mentioned local-level factors was incomparable to the level of blame dealt to local agricultural colleges and some national universities, by respondents.

Multiple remarks by farmers and farm workers alike suggest that significant failure is occurring in attempts to link capacities to opportunities by the institutions specifically designed to ensure matching success.

> Seale Hayne was such a marvellous resource that was producing agriculturalists of the future […] and they were all good farmers that could go anywhere, do anything. I mean, they're probably being produced somewhere now. But they're not being produced in Devon (Farmer 7)

> The training is […] not adequate and, you know, it needs to be better. I mean, the relief milker, the boy I've got relief milking for me now, he's been to Bicton. He found it a waste of time. And even my son who's not too, he's bright but he's not…he found it a waste of time (Farmer 7)

> I've issues with the colleges, as I've said. I do think the colleges are not delivering […] I don't think they're delivering what the industry needs (Farmer 6)

> A friend of ours […] he went to Bicton and done a tractor driving course. And he went to Bicton for a week and he sat on a tractor and drove round the yard at Bicton and reversed a trailer and then he applied to a contractor to drive a tractor for a contractor, and they laughed at him! And he couldn't believe it. He didn't know why. Well, he said, I'm a tractor driver. It says, look here, I've been to Bicton. I'm a tractor driver. You've got no experience, you're no good to us. And I had him here and he drove a tractor round the yard and no no no no no. That ain't gonna happen (Farmer 15)

> I've had a girl come in from college who'd been at agricultural college for 6 months. She still didn't know how to drive a tractor. You know, it's not good enough from the agricultural college she was at. You know, she was 17. And is she wants to be a farmer, surely she should be able to drive a tractor after 6 months of working doing placements and what not (Farm Worker 15)

> I think colleges and stuff like that are gonna have to up what they are, because I think a level 2, people look at a level 2 and think, well yeah, you've done a level 2, but what can you do? I think a level 2 is gonna have to start to mean something (Farm Worker 5)

These comments continue the discussion of the different value placed on different types of knowledge. formal qualifications have a tendency to be disregarded by the farmers in question, if they are unaccompanied by identifiable practical experience.

Tipples and Morriss (2002) conducted a New Zealand study examining capacities and opportunities in the agricultural industry. They too recognised the role of training and education in matching capability and opportunity yet discovered discrepancies between 'what industry appears to want and what providers appear to provide' (ibid: 26). Their data identifies the qualities of a worker as having precedence over skills and practical experience for employers in New Zealand, facets that are largely uncited in the qualification aims and learning outcomes of colleges. The author argues that probes regarding 'skills and attributes' were an inefficient means of measuring employer's needs as 'skills' pertain to an ability to do something, whilst an 'attribute' is usually related to an individual's personality. The second most sought after attribute after 'good work ethic and attitudes' was 'honesty', an attribute that is difficult to teach in a formal setting.

Significant emphasis is placed upon 'whole-heartedness' and 'half-heartedness' in the pursuit of farming; an emotional investment is perceived as required in order to dedicate oneself to the job otherwise failure is inevitable. This seems to be considered especially the case for people who aren't born into farming or come from a farming background/community, as if those born into farming are also born with extra capacity for the job. Those from outside must work harder and be more dedicated and more committed because it isn't 'in the blood'.

Hard work, common sense, and attitude are valued by most of the employing farmers more than formal qualifications, or in many cases, aptitude.

> A lot of the students that go through Bicton, you know, they'll pass their courses and everything and they'll do their health and safety, but we had a local lad, that came helping us, but we couldn't employ him because we didn't *trust* him from a health and safety point of view (Farmer 19)

> I mean, they come out of colleges with these bits of paper, they can drive this machine and that machine but *they're not safe* to blimmin be on the machine.

> You know, it's expensive equipment these days. So, the colleges have got a lot to answer for really (Farmer 5)

> We've had several that have gone through Duchy College and all that, then they come to farms having done an NVQ level 3 or whatever and they come and they are *useless*. They come and they just ***aren't prepared*** for the job (Farmer 6)

More than just a theoretical framework, the Human Capability Framework can be used in an applied setting, and in this case might be used to translate understandings of each different element that feeds into the lifescape of a potential farm labour contributor, into actions which will ultimately lead to practical outcomes such as better training, an improvement in farm culture and possibly job creation.

9.3.1.6 National-Level Constraints

Much of the reasoning behind labour shortages is based on the concept of a 'good farmer' being hard-working, dedicated and in possession of a good work ethic. Silvasti (2003) mentions that this emphasis on hard work results not entirely from 'circumstances unique to agriculture' but does suggest something unique exists in farming as a way of life that 'encouraged farmers to commit strongly to the ethic of work' (ibid: 145). Her work also echoes that of Burton (2004) who accords the hard work performed by the farmer to its symbolic (and thus cultural capital) value within the wider agricultural community. The ability to work hard is an entrenched and immutable aspect of farm labour, more due to the hours involved than the physical aspect so often associated with farm labour historically. Although the physicality of work has changed significantly since the advent of mechanisation, and the role of the farmer and the farm worker has receded in terms of the community, the values attributed to hard work appear to be resolute amongst all cohorts who work on the land.

But it is this very perception of hard work that many respondents cite as a reason for farm work maintaining such a bad image in wider British society, as previously mentioned. Several respondents alluded to the laziness of the younger generation and British non-farming culture in general.

> [Do you think young people are different now?] Yeah, cause they don't wanna work Friday night. Or Friday afternoon (Contractor 1)

> I think that people my age are really lazy and aren't willing to do it (Farm Worker 3)

> Oh, you can't get British labour. People aren't prepared to do the hours. The youngsters, I call youngsters, but you know, leaving college or whatever, won't work the hours (Farmer 13)

> There was one kid who was quite good but he wasn't very interested really and he sort of, we'd be doing something and he'd look at his watch and kind of say, oh I want to go home now. And I'd say, Jack it is kind of like three o clock in the afternoon, mate. And he just said, oh, I'm a bit tired. And I'd say, ok, off you go. And then the next day he kind of says, oh I might go home now, and you think, look the kind of deal is a little bit that the hours are 8 to 5 and if you say I'm going home now too many times, it's kind of like you're quitting (Farmer 16)

> I mean we once took on a chap, um, for a staff member and he never even turned up for work! You know, and you get people apply for jobs, they don't even turn up for the interview. It's horrendous (Farmer 5)

> They just can't be arsed. And I don't know if its upbringing or just the way that the younger generation is (Farmer 3)

Farmers acknowledged that farming 'isn't promoted as an exciting, sexy business to work in' (Farmer 7) and that 'a negative image of the industry' (Farmer 20) still precludes the work from being attractive.

> It's hard work. And probably for that £30,000 a year, you're milking cows, or you'll be driving a tractor, so you'll be working very long hours, doing the same job, which is not very stimulating. And again I think it comes down to that. People don't want to milk cows for seven hours a day. There's more glamourous jobs. And maybe it also goes back to the sort of image a little bit, of whether you wanna be a herdman or whether you wanna be a builder and things like that. Maybe one's not as sexy as the other one (Farmer 16)

Farmer 20 blames this image partly on the fact that 'you only see farming moaning on the telly', despite having 'great ambassadors like Countryfile and Adam Henson, things like that, absolutely brilliant trying to promote this industry'. The problem with this, she maintains, is that these programmes sell to a certain demographic, subsequently suggesting 'we're selling to the converted'.

General upbringing

Changes in how children are brought up and how less time is spent outdoors were also blamed for fewer entrants into the industry.

> You know ‘kids don’t play like they used to’, so they’re kind of messing about outside which is effectively what encourages you to be farmers probably doesn’t happen now (Farmer 1)

Cultural shifts in both how children spend their time at home now, as well as the health and safety aspects mentioned earlier, are diagnosed as contributors to the current situation. Many respondents blamed video games and the internet for a lack of interest, as well as over-precautious parents preventing them from straying from the most urban spaces within the rural. But are these partly a response to a diminished space within which young people can engage with one another, and few decision-making responsibilities being offered to young people within the villages? By not providing young people and teenagers with a positive experience of both the rural and farming, the result is an extra push out of the village towards urban areas which might be more accepting of them.

> The idea of sitting in an office and playing computer games which is what I’m sure most children and most teenagers perceive as sitting at a computer is doing is just an extension of that, it seems like a more attractive prospect than being out in all weathers (Farmer 1)

> They got too much of this old computer stuff, ‘aven’t they. Don’t wanna know. We never had that when us is kids. We’d be glad to get out, out doing something, now they sit in, stay indoors, playing with the old computer (Fam worker 7)

Matthews et al (2000) suggest that a polarisation exists between children who are brought up on farms in rural areas and those who live in rural areas but have no access to farms apart from potential school visits or events such as Open Farm Sunday. They described how the ‘rural idyll’ is a construct for adults, and that ‘rather than being part of an ideal community many children, especially the least affluent and teenagers, felt dislocated and detached from village life’ (ibid: 141). Their study of 372 children in 28 villages in Northamptonshire discovered that farms, nature and wild areas are actually cordoned off areas for many rural children, many of whom described particular negative interactions with farmers and landowners.

Under the same early years umbrella, schools were hugely implicated by interview respondents in being responsible for both a poor image of farming and preventing talented young people from moving into the industry. The reinforcement of negative associations with farm work by teachers was blamed by some on their inherent lack of understanding of agriculture itself.

> The teachers at school asked me, what do you want to do when you leave school then? I said, be a contractor. They said, well you can't be a contractor. I don't think the teacher knew what it meant (Contractor 3)

> My partner being a primary teacher, I've ended up going into schools and teaching, take a calf in and stuff and talking about it. And it's the teachers are the ones that are asking the questions as much as the pupils, if you know what I mean […] So they don't really understand it. We've sort of lost a generation I think (Farmer 8)

> I'll never ever forget at school, at high school, I was put in a detention for in a cooking class, saying that free-range chickens got shut in at night. Like, I know that's true. It would be true on probably every free-range chicken farm you go to, and the teacher said that. And I'll never forget on Radio 1, when I was working in Sussex, like two years ago there were all these statistics that came out that, like, fifty seven per cent of children thought that cheese grew on trees or something. And I was just like what, what is going on?! Like these kids need help (Farm Worker 3)

Most FLCs believed that general public opinion of farm workers was largely negative, archaic or misinformed. Several farm labour contributors stated that greater public support for farmers existed in the contemporary environment, what Whitehead et al (2012) has described as a renaissance in agriculture.

> The NFU research has shown that there's a lot appreciation for farmers, it's going up. And there seems to be, I think it's sort of improving, and it's sort of catching up cos we're obviously seeing a lot of bigger kit on the farm and stuff and on the roads and that so, I think they're getting the hang of it (Farmer 8)

> I think we've got the converted who are hugely supportive, and we've got the ones who actually don't give a damn (Farmer 20)

But a disparity between support for the industry, and an understanding of the actual work requirements continues to pervade workers reflections on their status within the wider community.

> I think there's a lot of public support for farmers but I do think, you know, you do get that slight perception that, you know, Devon-born, Devon bred, strong-of-arm, thick-of-head (Farmer 16)

> I think there's been quite a lot of tv coverage lately that's been quite enlightening, that people perhaps have got a different view […] So that's

> probably good []… but someone who has no connection with agricultural farming would still think of the yokel on the gate with the pitch fork and the straw hanging out of his mouth (Farmer 14)

> If they don't know much about farming, they wouldn't know much about farm workers. And if they do, they're probably just moaning about because they're holding up on the roads Farm Worker 6)

> I think they've become so far distanced from it that they don't really care. You know, they just see a machine going on. They don't see the person that's driving the machine. It's just a machine, isn't it? So, and if it's shiny and new it's, oh, bloody rich farmers, isn't it (Farm Worker 17)

Contractors in particular revealed that they believed that the general, non-farming public did not know what an agricultural contractor was. Several confessed that they felt misunderstood or invisible to the general public, and even to the government, as a cohort.

> Some of the people in Defra don't even know what a contractor is (Contractor 3's Wife)

> A lot of people don't even know what it is. And I'm the same because, like I say, my wife's not from a farming background and when we had the shop, you know, most of her friends are not from farming communities and I get fed up with explaining to them what I do, so I don't do it anymore (Contractor 4)

> There's a lot of people who don't know what a contractor is. They know there's a lot of tractors on the road, and they all get frustrated with tractors on the road (Contractor 6)

> Oh gosh, no, they've no idea [what a contractor is] (Contractor 2's Wife)

> Most people would think you were just farmers, wouldn't 'em. They'd think it was farmers out doing their work. They wouldn't know it was anybody else (Contractor 3)

> They don't like us (Contractor 8)

Contractor 5 blamed this on the increasing distance that has developed between agriculture and society, stating that 'people are so far away from how the countryside works. They just think that farming and agriculture are evil'. These responses echo Barley and Kunda's (2006) conclusions, cited in Chapter three, where contractors revealed their inability to feel part of the social fabric and rather perceived themselves,

from an outsiders point of view, as a commodity to be bought and sold like any other resource.

9.3.2 'Very Unskilled and Probably a Bit Stupid' – The Bottom of the Economic Stairway

The implication is that rurality as a whole creates a cultural identity apart from the rest of the population, and whilst farmers might be categorised along a very vast spectrum of definitions, the farm worker is ideologically placed at the very bottom of the pile. A perspective probably arising from historical, traditional perceptions of the farm worker, as well as matched by ideas of 'unskilled' migrant workers in the UK and the US, the farm worker and the contractor feels like society has created a divide between themselves and the urban other. Berry (2002), in response to a 2001 article by Harvard scientist, Richard Lewontin, concludes that 'the small farmers and the people of small towns are understood as occupying the bottom step of the economic stairway and deservedly falling from it because they are rural, which is to say not metropolitan or cosmopolitan, which is to say socially, intellectually, and culturally inferior to "us."' (ibid: 22).

Why is this the case?

The stigma of manual labour, a job for slaves or people who are less than those whose occupation relies on the ability of the mind does, according to respondents, still exist. The entrenched notion that the requirement to work with your body automatically cancels any intellectual input not only ignores how much of contemporary farming is carried out sitting down, the sedentary nature of farm work, e.g. using GPS, computer software, and expensive and complicated machinery, but also that manual labour and intellectual application are by no means mutually exclusive.

> I think a lot of people think that you're very unskilled, and you're probably a bit stupid (Farm Worker 3)

> When we do our Open Farm Sunday, people are amazed by the factor that it's a slightly bit technical. You know, farming is definitely seen as bloke chewing a piece of straw, chucks his cows out in the field [You think that's still the case?] I think so yeah. I do think that is the case. I mean whether or not, um, it depends what part of the country you're from as well, doesn't it (Farmer 1)

> There's lots of non-academic kids that get pushed into agriculture because their teachers think they're too thick to do something else (Farmer 10)

> They sent me a along two lads, and basically they both had sort of, not special needs, but they weren't the brightest, and the kind of attitude of the school was, these are really stupid boys, they can't do nothing else. They can go and work on a farm. I mean that is so far wrong. That is so far wrong. You know. I mean I feel, to be a really constructive person on a farm you've got to have the full package, do you know what I mean, you've gotta be fit, you've gotta be hard working, you've gotta be resourceful, you've gotta think for yourself (Farmer 7)

> I was discouraged from going into farming. There needs to be a push within education and society as a whole that farming is a skilled job. There's a massive amount of variety tied into it, and it's not something you can just bumble along doing (Farmer 8)

> Especially in Devon where there's a lot of small, mixed farms, you know, the general farm worked is an underrated position and it's almost impossible to advertise for a general farm worker because you get someone that isn't actually any good at anything and actually what you want is someone that is able to do anything (Farmer 10)

Farmer 9 reveals how she was stopped in the corridor and actively discouraged from allowing her son to go into farming.

> He was looking at getting As in his A-levels, and they thought he'd be wasted on the farm. They don't realise that you need brains to do farming as well (Farmer 9)

Several FLCs admitted to being actively steered away from a career in agriculture by either teachers or careers advisors, who become active agents in the development of belief systems regarding a career in agriculture.

> The careers advisor would put the bottom end of the class, and point them in the direction of farming. And that sort of attitude still permeates through [And what do you think about that?] Uh, rubbish, Yeah. Because I think I was the other end of the spectrum. I wanted to do agriculture and my principal at high school wouldn't let me. Told me to go off and do pure sciences (Farm Worker 1)

> Before I even got into agriculture at university, my careers advisor told me, no you don't wanna do anything with agriculture, you're too smart for that (Farm Worker 4)

Thompson and Russell (1993), during a study of secondary school students in Illinois, discovered that 'exposure to coursework in agriculture had a positive influence on

students' beliefs about agriculture' (ibid: 59), an outcome that had a knock-on effect to both parents and counsellors who had also been exposed to said coursework. They conclude that 'counsellors and parents should be viewed as potential and actual allies of agricultural educators' (ibid: 61).

Despite the continuation of negative perceptions external to the farming community, recognition was established amongst respondents of how skill requirements have changed over time; farm work is no longer a matter of brawn over brain.

> I think years ago it was the dumb one in the family that did the farming, because they were the one that got the sense to look after the animals […] they were the ones that couldn't do mental stuff and that but they were brilliant at, you know, the practical work (Contractor 2's Wife)

> The year group that I was in, we were very, our capabilities were either like, you're A-grade students or you're, you know, scraping the barrel. And the ones that, I know it sounds really derogatory, but you know, low achievers, they would go to college one day in the week and on their second day of the week they'd go out on a work placement, so like, a lot of the lads never actually bothered going to the college. They'd just do two weeks at the farm that they spent all their time on anyway. A lot of them, they lived there! So it was just sort of like, well we can't really support you, or don't want to support you is how I viewed it then and still do now. Um, so, you just go and farm so we don't have to worry about you (Contractor 7's Wife)

> These people that are illiterate like that are really good at covering up. If we're not careful in agriculture, you know, by teachers and whatever, well, you go farming. You know, and practically driving a tractor and all those things, they're very good. But at some stage it lets them down (Farmer 19)

> We need brains not brawn in the industry. We're desperate for it and that doesn't matter whether at 16 years old or, you know, graduate age. We need to get the brains in. And sometimes they're not thinking about that first when they try and send people here (Farmer 20)

Farmer 16, contrastingly, believes there is still a place for the less academic workers.

> I think you'll get farm boys still who are like [Contractor X], who will probably leave school at an early age who regard themselves as, sometimes, that's the trouble with the academic world we live in, is a lot of these kids come out with stupid stamped on their foreheads because they can't get GCSE grade 1s, but sometimes they're the best guys because they might not be the most academic

> but they're the hardest working and they've probably got the skills and aptitidue that nobody else has got because sometimes it just works like that. And I think they usually find their spot and they usually find, especially down here, they find they've got a worth, but they've got to overcome that stigma of stupid. And I think that is a tragedy and I think that's modern life, the way we've gone down. And that's the trouble with farming, is that you, you know, academics counts for something but it doesn't count for that much really. It's about who you are and what you can do and how much you wanna do. So, I kind of think you'll always get those guys, the ones that slip through the academic net and will probably not be qualified enough to do anything else and they will come back to farming and I'm not knocking that because they're sometimes the hardest working background of it. But I feel sorry for them because they probably won't earn the money that they're worth, which is a shame because there shouldn't be that big disparity in wages (Farmer 16)

But most farm labour contributors currently involved in farm work repudiate this claim, understanding the varied skill involved in any aspect of the farming industry.

> Me youngest son, he's running the business. He has more up 'ere (touches head) than t'other one. T'other one, he goes out to work (Contractor 1)

> It's not for anybody that's a little bit challenged anymore, to be honest (Farm Worker 17)

Because no definitive definition exists for either skill or knowledge in the realm of farm work, the general sense is that qualities and local knowledge override universal knowledge, attitude over aptitude, and yet whomever these capabilities belong to generally needs to be bright and capable. It is important to bear in mind that these results are highly likely to be region-specific and are therefore, not generalisable.

9.4 Conclusion

Severe issues appear to exist with regards to matching capabilities to opportunities. Myriad factors are identified by respondents as being responsible for the widening gap between potential workers and employers. Principally, respondents demonstrated that they were not actively obligated to enter the farming profession if stemming from a farming background, although few were actively discouraged either, and unless individuals from a non-farming background experienced some level of indoctrination into farming at a young age, few developed an interest later on in life. Health and safety issues on farms were cited on numerous occasions for less direct contact by farming family children with the farm at a young age, yet it appears that cracks in interest

development at a young age widen into a noticeable chasm as children reach secondary school level and beyond. Amongst all respondents, family appeared overall, to be a positive motivator towards the uptake of a career in agriculture, where applicable. Yet at secondary school level, members of each of the three cohorts expressed how either they had directly been steered away from a desire to farm by careers advisors or teachers, or had experienced those same actor's efforts to dissuade them from allowing their children to farm. This was especially the case if those children had been targeted as 'bright'.

It appears that capacity formation can be stifled by local factors, such as family discouragement, although this was a rare occurrence amongst respondents, teachers and careers advisors, and poor farm culture, and wider national factors such as lack of education surrounding food production, health and safety enforcement affecting school visits to farms, and a generally poor image of farm work as a career. Equally, reduced opportunities in the form of training, both on and off farm, being afforded interesting tasks at work, lack of career progression opportunities and insufficient training at colleges and universities all prevent a sustainable matching process whereby individuals have the right skills, knowledge and attitudes for posts that provide what those workers need to feel satisfied and motivated to be employed in agriculture.

This chapter has concentrated on those actors cited by respondents for having a direct influence on both capacities and opportunities, but these are often affected by other actors, some of which were specified in wider discussions regarding farm labour and agriculture in general. Figure 9.9 depicts the author's adaptation of the New Zealand Department of Labour's (1999) representation of the human capability framework, pictured in chapter four, as applied to the farm labour contributor in the South West of England. It includes many of the actors mentioned during the interviewing process, identifying where they might lie as an influencer upon the farm labour contributor within the framework. Neither capacity nor opportunity influencers are mutually exclusive as access to, or lack of access to, opportunities, will also affect the capacities accruable to the worker.

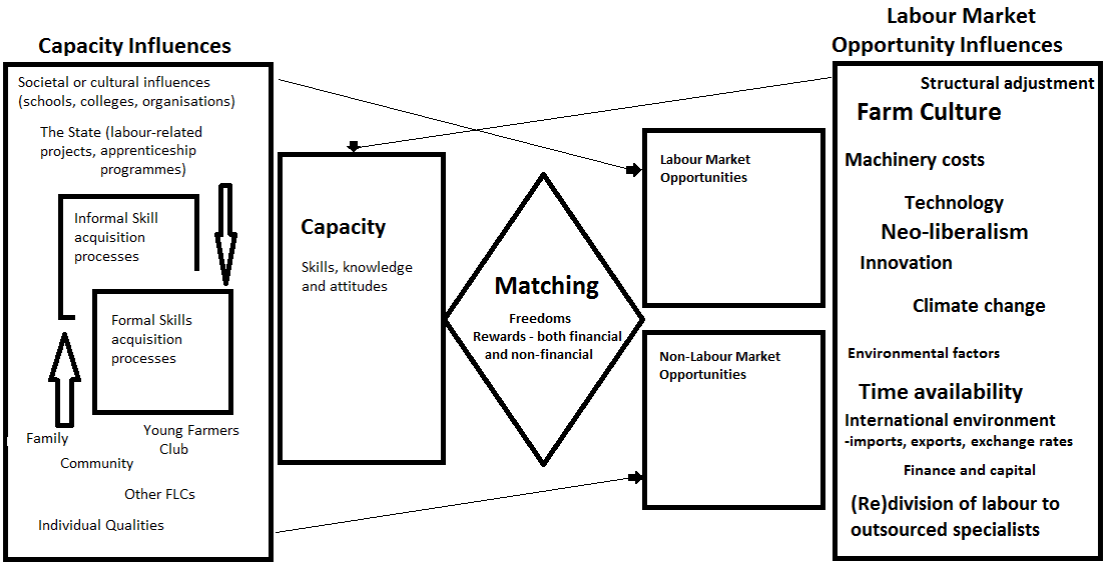

Figure 9.9. The application of the human capability framework to farm labour contributors in Devon in terms of capacity and opportunity influences (or actors)

The externalisation of culpability regarding why a labour shortage exists led a number of arguments, directing attention away from farmers, management-techniques and on-farm culture to schools, parents and media, for poor socialisation of children regarding agriculture, to the decrease in small farms, to British culture generally and to agricultural universities and colleges.

However, several farmers and farm workers identified that changes are required by actors more immediate to the farm worker, such as on-farm culture. Poor management skills prevent farming from being attractive to those external to it, and can have a tendency to repel those who desire to work in farming due to being given boring tasks or being pushed away from interesting tasks by the return of a farmer's child (usually the son). Due to the increase in both physical and social mobility, without interesting tasks, agency in the workplace, career and personal development opportunities and some career ladder, to speak of, little is likely to change. Also, the fierce independence of the farmer who prefers to do a job himself than take time to train somebody in that task is unwittingly chipping away at the labour market.

Farming has numerous motivators outside of economic factors. Few outside of farming are privy to these benefits due to their expressive nature, which, along with the diminished prevalence of small, family farms, is another cause of the current labour shortages in skilled and permanent labour.

As sustainable intensification or sustainability in general within the industry is regarded as ever more important if farming in Britain is to survive, all types of farm labour

contributor need to be kept informed and up-to-date, as relationship dynamics between the workers change and skill and knowledge levels equalise.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.0 Introduction

This thesis has provided a mixed-methods consideration of the contemporary farm labour contributor in the South West of England in the early twenty-first century. It provides an illustration of not only who contributes to the labour being directly carried out on the land, but also how the different actants within the lifescapes of these workers are experienced by, perceived by and influence upon these individuals. This was achieved through a postal survey of 1251 respondents in the South West, as well as 45 interviews with a mixture of farmers, farm workers and agricultural contractors in mid- and east-Devon.

The research makes a valuable contribution to rural sociology through understanding the lifescape of the farm worker from the ground up. Overall, it addresses the importance of incorporating farm workers and contributors into the agricultural and more specifically, the sustainable intensification research agenda, particularly emphasising the importance of agricultural research and policy-making parameters being inclusive of all individuals who actively contribute to the land, rather than exclusive

Several key findings have emerged from this research, which sought to:

> Understand the role of the principal farm labour cohorts within the sustainable intensification agenda, both as **a resource for labour,** and as **agents of social and cultural capital** within the farming industry.

The former part to the above research aim was examined through observations regarding availability and by utilising the Human Capability Framework in order to understand related opportunities and capacities; and the latter part achieved by incorporating a version of Actor Network Theory into the lifescape model.

A review of the associated literature in Chapters Two and Three revealed that sources of empirical data regarding farm workers in the United Kingdom have been left wanting since the end of the twentieth century, and that outside of migrant labour-focused research, little has been written about other agents currently contributing to labour on the land (Ball 1987a). The literature review chapters also identified a market transition whereby a (re)division of labour has occurred due to structural changes in the flexible labour market of agriculture, and introduced the idea that a ‘new worker profile’ has emerged belonging to those workers who form part of that market. This thesis attempted to remove the emphasis on the individual, an approach that Sen has been

criticised for in his work on freedoms (Pelenc it al 2013), and instead accounts for the relationship between the individual and the collective.

Three research questions were developed inspired by Newby's (1977) seminal work on farm labour in the late 1970s, in order to approach the above research aim:

1. What is the situation at the site of employment for both workers and employer?

2. How do all agricultural labour contributors relate to their immediate and wider communities?

and

3. What capacities and opportunities exist in the agricultural labour market to ensure that the needs of all actors are met, and therefore ensure industry sustainability into the future?

This chapter will summarise the key findings that evolved through the examination of each of these questions, and explain how these findings fit into the larger picture incorporating sustainable intensification. A critical evaluation of the limitations of this piece of research follows, with an ultimate summation of possible research agendas that might result from these results for future studies.

10.1 The British Farm Worker: Extinct or Extanct?

The beginning of the twentieth century was met by a declaration that the traditional farm worker was close to extinction (Howkins 2003). Over a decade later and this has proved to be an unfortunate fallacy, as such a shared assumption has led to the farm worker being largely ignored both within the agricultural research agenda and, until recently[18], by policy-making strategists. Data collected by Defra (2017d) as well as the postal survey results, reveal that the decline in numbers of traditional farm workers in the South West has halted, whilst the likelihood is that a small increase in jobs in agriculture will become available in the next five years. A significant proportion of farms in the South West rely on some kind of hired labour, so as a cohort, they are worthy of attention. But relying on a categorisation of 'seasonal', 'traditional' or 'hired' only, in attempts to understand workers numbers has been proven inadequate as the structure of the agricultural labour market has changed fundamentally in the last fifty years.

[18] This emphasis though, remains on accessibility to migrant workers

10.2 The Situation at the Site of Employment

Three principal categories of worker currently contribute to labour directly impacting upon the land in the South West; farmers, hired farm workers and contingent workers. Apprentices and family members are included in the bracket of farm workers if they are paid. The contingent bracket incorporates both casual labour and agricultural contractors. Otherwise, outside of these three categories exist unpaid family members, neighbours, volunteers, and the peripheral agricultural specialists whose work, although potentially significant to the industry, does not necessarily involve them directly and physically working the land.

Primarily, this signifies that agriculture is not separate from the rest of the economy with regards to the rise of the gig economy and the flexible labour market, especially with regards to contractors in the South West of England. But rather than portending 'a dystopian future of disenfranchised workers hunting for their next wedge of piecework' (Sundararajan 2015: ibid), it has been shown that the market situation of the agricultural contractor is much more nuanced than this (section 10.3).

At the same time, labour composition of businesses is reliant upon access to reliable and quality workers of which there appears to be a shortage, either as direct farm employees (as demonstrated by both survey and interview data), or direct employees of contractors (as demonstrated by interview results). As of yet, it appears that contractors prove relatively easy as a cohort to get hold of when a farmer requires their services. However, skilled labour is reported as less easy to come by, a phenomenon which is likely to increase following Britain's exit from the European Union if access to the single market is to be affected. Even though only 12 per cent of farms surveyed currently employ migrant workers, they would have proven an invaluable resource in the face of an impending labour crisis.

The situation at the site of employment reveals itself, therefore, to be one of vulnerability. A reliance on either traditional workers or agricultural contractors in an environment where labour shortages are apparently on the increase and where a generation of bright potential workers has been shown to have been actively discouraged from a career in agriculture, could mean that the labour crisis in the UK extends far beyond that which has, until now, been largely associated with seasonal workers only (House of Commons 2017). Simultaneously however, such a shift in the on-farm situation has, alongside other external market factors, allowed the farm worker to lift themselves out of their long and stagnant liaison with poverty, deference, immobility and subordination, to become active agents in the workplace, whether they

remain a part of the 'traditional' labour structure or have peeled away into a more self-employed or employed role as a contractor.

10.3 Actor Networks and their Influence on the Farm

10.3.1 The 'New Worker Profile'

The differences between the three worker cohorts; their proportion of work responsibilities; and the 'new worker profile' has caused new relationship formations to emerge from existing ones, and far from existing in a state of deference, a quality previously ascribed to farm workers, even if only as a performed quality (Newby 1977), due to recognised labour shortages across the industry, farm workers overall possess greater agency than they ever have previously. Where they do not, intense dissatisfaction is felt and the employer discovers themselves in a more precarious market situation than the farmer who is able to fulfil as many opportunity requirements that he/she can. The term 'new worker profile' is not applicable to the seasonal worker who, due to regional diversity and circumstance, has made only fleeting appearances in this thesis.

The overall improvement in the worker agency of all employed cohorts which has enabled the development of the 'new worker profile' results from the fragility of the state of agriculture at the moment, but is also ultimately confined within that same fragile state. They all form part of the same organism that if damaged, experiences a causal sequence of events that can affect all actants forming part of the total network.

The emergence of farm labour contributors as having developed a new worker profile is, in some respects, a delayed response to industrialisation. The *workplace* of the agricultural contractor, for example, has changed only in that the fields they work belong to many, rather than the singular, but their *workstation* (in the case of those operating large machinery) emulates the desk of the post-industrial worker. Farm work, which has for so long been set apart from other industries where spatial changes had a significant impact on the lives and identities of workers, is now following a similar route, in the case of the contractor. The world of work is changing as the flexibility gig gains strength and as Farm Worker 11 stated when asked about his future aspirations, 'checking in on my iphone or tablet, at my farm management dashboard, seeing that everything is running ok at home, whilst I'm off doing something outdoorsy in a nice climate' is no longer a fairy tale for the farmer, or farm worker. When Steinbeck (1939/1992) lamented the industrialisation of farming, writing of the man in his iron seat, for whom 'the land bore under iron, and under iron gradually died; for it was not loved or hated' (ibid:38), it is unlikely he will have envisaged that another degree of

separation loomed, separation from the land *by* machine to the complete physical separation *from* the machine itself.

However, such a level of flexibility is, for now, not an immediate option for many of the smaller farms as day to day work continues to be dictated to some extent by the seasons and the weather, and the proximity of the farm labour contributor to land, livestock and the farmyard is still necessary to achieve efficiency on a small to medium scale.

10.3.2 A Focus on the Farmer-Contractor Interface

A relationship of symbiosis or interdependence has developed between farms, farmers and contractors. Historically, farms could run as an insular unit where everything was 'on-farm', but the cost and size of machinery and the rapidity of technology growth has caused it to become impossible for small and medium farms to exist without the numerical and functional flexibility afforded by contractors. This transition has led not only to thinner social boundaries appearing around what, for some time, has been a farm-centred operation, but farmers have had to develop new managerial skills and relations regarding these and other external actors. Whilst at the same time, contractors change, adjust, form and disintegrate according to the spatial and economic movement/fluctuations of the farms themselves. Bigger farms are a threat to contractors because capital proves less of a constraint which, depending on the type of farming system, could present a threat or a blessing in terms of overall labour requirements.

Contractors, who are often assumed to be entirely dependent upon their customer (Peel and Boxall 2005), reveal themselves to be involved in a delicate dance with the farmer or land manager, one which is inextricably linked to numerous other agents within their networks, either shared or separate. The weather, the political climate, market forces, capital, the community, capacities, and other farm labour contributors, are all intertwined within this relationship. A state of attached interdependency is proven to provide a greater level of security than that of detached interdependency, but either can ultimately be sensitive to market changes.

So, this symbiosis and interdependence somewhat equalises the power and agency dynamic between the two parties even though this is not felt equally by both parties. Contractors in particular felt a general sense of being undervalued despite their role in the industry being described as crucial by most farmers. Economic prioritisation formed the basis for this perception, a situation that contractors themselves proved partly responsible for and which, as machinery costs increase into the future, will require

more direct, frank communications between the cohorts in order to formalise payment strategies.

A connection is not limited to the interface relationship as the contractor also fulfils a role in the perpetuation of the 'good farmer' symbolisation, the outcome of their work being representative of the 'good farmer' as the invisible transference of responsibility is moved to the visible display of the farmland.

The most significant constraints to the formation of meaningful relationships between farmers and contractors are time and capital costs, portentous to the wellbeing of both, as the formation of social bonds can offer important social and cultural capital in the face of an otherwise relatively isolated lifescape.

10.3.3 The Physical and Psychological Dispersal of the Farm Worker

The traditional farm worker has moved both physically and psychologically further away from his/her employer. The assertion that 'farmers have shifted from adopting a paternalistic role with regard to their employees to adopting a more distant and bureaucratic role' (Geddes and Scott 2011: 208) as a result of this is a truism for some of the larger farms studied, where the mobile phone has established itself as the principal intermediary between parties. But on many of the smaller farms, a paternalistic atmosphere jostles with a more egalitarian relationship, depending often on the age and education of the workers.

The farm worker-farmer interface has evolved into a semblance of post-industrial worker-employer relationships due to a resetting of spatial boundaries between living-space and work-space, although their shared belief system still smacks of Durkheimian mechanical solidarity leaving remnants of the encapsulated community described by Newby in his typology of farm worker-farm communities. This enables the perpetuity of certain farming scripts regarding newcomers. As a result of such spatial transitions, a new typology has developed from the occupational – encapsulated – farm-centred typology to include the new dispersed-encapsulated community. Bigger farms still witness the farm-centred community but purely encapsulated communities are rare due to such low numbers of agricultural workers in one geographical area. Dispersed-encapsulated emulates spatial-psychological aspects of the place of the farm worker in the wider world.

Spatial organisation of work tasks has prevented the formation of significant relationships between farm workers and contractors, so the social requirements of the farm worker are met either via on-farm colleagues which can range across a spectrum from co-worker to friend but can exemplify isolation according to some farm-centred

workers; or within their own communities, which often prove less isolating than their farm-centred contemporaries. The farmer-worker interface as a social instrument proved less important to the overall wellbeing and satisfaction of the farm worker than either expressive elements of farm work, such as nature-connectedness, place attachment, animal attachment and place identity, or the ability to create freedoms through capacity formation or opportunities.

The complexity of an increase in human actant input on the farm, and how each of these in turn is influenced by other human and non-human actants mean that time constraints and division of labour might ultimately negatively affect the social wellbeing of all labour contributors. There also exists a risk that it will prevent essential exchange of knowledge and/or information between all 'frontline' workers, especially in terms of sustainably intensive or agri-environmental farming methods to combat soil erosion, poor water management or efforts to conserve biodiversity.

Non-human, or off-farm actants, possess agency that creates a sensitive situation at the place of employment for all farm labour contributors. Change off farm, such as political (Brexit), seasonal (bad weather) or global (exchange rates), as well as changes on-farm (structural adjustment, expansion/contraction) all pull and push at each of these actors leaving each of them in a varying state of vulnerability according to where the weight of the actor-network tug-of-war lies at any one time. Any labour associated risk alleviation is currently achieved via a delicate act of balancing negotiation and accommodation with mutual loyalty, trust, social interaction and access to capacities and opportunities.

10.3.4 Land and A New Typology

Further analysis of interview data revealed that respondents in all categories of farm labour contributor perceive the workspace around them in accordance with Leopold's 'community of interdependent parts' (1966: 219) and that farm, land, landscape and environment are indefinable as individual concepts but that these terms along with soil, water, animals, are generally conceived collectively as one entity.

Gray's typology of individuals' relationship to the farm can be extended and adapted to include the farm worker and the contractor, where meanings tied up between individual and place slide from a sense of total shared essence, or consubstantiality, for farmers, to part-consubstantiality or connectedness for farm workers, to a more detached sense of 'care for the land' for contractors, with blurred boundaries existing between each. These meanings also pertained to a sense of time through reference to varying aspects of the FLC's lifescape. The farmer referred to place and land connection often using the past, linking it to family, history, heritage and tied-up capital. The farmer worker's

reference is more present, as less responsibility, daily separation, a 'life apart' from the farm and greater occupational mobility prevented a full sense of consubstantiality. And the contractor perceived their 'care of the land' ethic in terms of the future, due to machinery developments, the need to constantly upskill, relationship-building and a desire for business perpetuity.

Combining interview results from Chapter Seven and Eight allows the formation of a new typology.

Farmer	:	Farm Worker	:	Contractor
Whole	:	Part	:	Dispersed
Consubstantiality	:	Connectedness	:	Care
Past	:	Present	:	Future
Valued	:	Less valued	:	Devalued
Active	:	Active/Passive	:	Active/Passive
Visible	:	Invisible	:	Nonexistent
Included	:	Ignored	:	Excluded

The economic placement of the individual has been deliberately excluded from the typology as the fallacy is to assume that the farmer is always in a better position than the farm worker or the contractor. In being tied to the farm and having capital tied-up in the farm, the farmer cannot always guarantee a personal income. The farm worker, however, usually has a contract and even though certain legal aspects of this, mainly hours worked, are sometimes bypassed, their payment is guaranteed. Contractors, on the other hand, are usually guaranteed payment but the timing of this is less stable.

Gray's (2000) dualities of discipline/indulgence, dominance/subordination and control/resistance have been excluded from the typology also, for reasons mentioned in section 10.2.2.1, as well as below. Due to rapid changes in technology and machinery, the farmer can likewise no longer be assumed to be the possessor of the most cultural capital, skills and knowledge, which positions both the farm worker and the contractor more centrally in the exchange process. However, understandings of the term sustainable intensification amongst the latter two cohorts appear to be minimal compared to that of the farmer, suggesting that the farmer is still traditionally viewed by non-farming advisors as the most important player in farming. The contractor and farm

worker, despite often being the 'front line' workers with land and livestock, are not divested with the necessary information that might ensure future requirements are met with regards to looking after the land. Yet as this research has shown, contrary to Ingram et al's (2010) assertion regarding the agency of the farmer in the implementation of agricultural management techniques, it is actually often the farm workers' or the contractors' actions that will determine the state of the soil.

But due to most respondents amongst all cohorts demonstrating feelings of ex-ante responsibility towards their environments, their ability or desire (as sometimes these two factors are mutually exclusive) to exercise self-restraint towards the treatment of the land for the good of human and non-human entities, demonstrates an attitude towards the environment that moves beyond the instrumental and thus heralds an optimistic outlook for the uptake of sustainable farming techniques in the future, however conceptual this may be. Constraints are, as foretold by Ballet et al (2011) (Chapter Four), the harbinger of non-environmentally friendly behaviours and they are shown to impede the wellbeing of all farm labour contributors, not only in establishing desirable human-human relationships but also -human -non-human, such as with the land.

Although a major constraint in the farming world is financial, both the results of this constraint, such as less available time, and other constraints, such as the shortage in labour, contribute to less social capital for the human agents within the networks, and can negatively affect family life due to work life balance, as well as having a negative effect on the wellbeing of livestock, soil and water. Overall, all of these factors can affect the wellbeing of the living agents in the lifescape. Significant actants which serve to minimise these contraints, such as the mobile phone, prove invaluable to the farm labour contributor, for reasons of both social and cultural capital, as well as health and safety.

Ensuring a sustainable future in terms of the industry, the environment and the food security of the population is dependent on the sustainability of the farm and the quality of labour that then leads to the quality of the land. If farmers cannot afford the labour they require, they will be pressed to perform the work themselves which ultimately means less care can be given to the land due to economic and time constraints. If farms increase in size to a point where contractors are no longer required and the farmer is able to perform every role, the 'eyes-to-acre' rule described by Berry (2009: 42)) will come into play. This idea that a low ratio of eyes-to-acre might impede the capacity of a farmer to efficiently manage a holding that is increasing in size is a concept which alludes to the impression that a greater number of people working on a holding might help to avoid mismanagement of resources.

10.3.5 Community: Site of Resource, Responsibility and Conflict

Respondents to both the survey and interviews revealed that the local community and informal networks still perform the principal role in labour recruitment, but largely fails as a resource for informal labour, such as 'neighbourliness' and labour or machinery-sharing, due to the high cost of capital. Informal cooperation, as discovered by Winter and Lobley (2016), is an act that, when it occurs, is maintained amongst smaller, family farms, rather than larger units. Farm size played little part in general community participation, however, and the spectrum upon which the farm labour contributor felt a part of the community included all extremes, from almost complete conscious isolation to full participation in as much as the community had to offer. No one cohort stood out as more active nor as having felt more feelings of responsibility towards the community, although contractors tend to contribute significantly towards both. Some agricultural contractors were also shown to provide a significant source of employment within rural communities, with the potential to increase as farmer requirements increase.

One of the most important 'communities' to the farm labour contributor emerged as the Young Farmer's Club which acts not only as an important site for social capital, but also a substantial resource for capacity and status accruement. It has become especially important for some of the older respondents who still fall within the age range of attendance. Woods (2011) states how groups such as the YFC 'provide a space for conviviality, which consolidates a sense of belonging, but they also function to facilitate altruistic practices about community responsibility and care' (ibid: 170).

The contraction of informal knowledge exchange platforms in the community, especially the pub, means that knowledge exchange is now more limited to being either on-farm, or at local events. Formal knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer, especially that which pertains to the sustainable intensification agenda, tends to be organised by non-farmers off-farm for farmers, thus creating an exclusive environment that creates a barrier to new knowledge for some farm labour contributors.

Perceptions of conflict were framed differently by different cohorts, with farmers understanding altercations with members of the community with regards to acts upon their farm, while farm workers and contractors witnessed conflictual behaviours in terms of themselves. For all cohorts, again, the constraints incited by conflict impeded on their well-being. Community, therefore, plays an integral role in the lifescape of the farm labour contributor in multiple ways. The script exposed by Newby (1977) and other commentators (Selfa et al 2010) remains prevalent but the presence of fewer FLCs has disempowered the farming community to the extent that farmers now feel

inclined to quell potential conflict as opposed to the newcomer feeling compelled to try to ‘fit in’.

Community and locality, according to interview results, are less significant indicators in the formation of place attachment and identity amongst farm labour contributors, although one of Raymond’s indicators in his five-dimensional model of place attachment, that of ‘friend bonding’ proved important to a number of farm workers (2010).

10.4 Widening the Understanding of Sustainable Intensification

Quantitative results revealed that the immigrant share of the labour force is comparatively low for the region which signifies that causes external to migration are culpable for the continuation of the ‘drift from the land’. At the same time, respondents noted not simply a quantifiable shortage of labour (sufficiency), but also a scarcity in the right labour (efficiency). Noe and Alrøe (2012) regard entities as being ‘enrolled or not enrolled as actants into the network’ (ibid: 17), and it has been witnessed in this study that if the actant enrolled, not simply the worker, but the skill or the knowledge of that worker, is not sufficient, then the system begins to break down.

Skills, knowledge, and experience were reported by respondents to be lacking and evaluating the causal factors for this using the Human Capability Approach revealed the main sources of influence for capacity formation, as well as three main components acting as constraints to both capacity and opportunity formation.

The family unit, farm culture, educational establishments, and the state, form the fulcrum of capacity formation, and each entity possess significant power as to whether an individual develops an interest in an agricultural career or is dissuaded from doing so. Farmers and contractors tend to originate from within families already established in farming or contracting, but farm workers showed a lower incidence of an agricultural family origin. However, for all non-farming background workers, an interest in farming had been established at an early age signifying that childhood experience plays a formative role in the development of future farm labour contributors. Ideas of farming as a disease, or being in the blood (Chiswell 2014; Wuthnow 2015) extend beyond the farmer or their successor to both farm workers and contractors, stemming from either family heritage of farmers, farm workers or contractors, or being injected with an experience as a child which then lay dormant until an opportunity to return to farming presented itself.

Further interview results established three main constraints to capacity and opportunity formation; farm culture, local-level constraints and national-level constraints. The

transition from the paternalistic-deferential dynamic to one of 'all ideas to the table' has created a culture of expectation amongst farm workers to have their needs fulfilled. This is due to an increase in their freedom to choose a career which has value for them. The absence of adequate training, career progression opportunities, farmer ambition, interesting work and/or fair treatment alongside other workers is shown to be sufficient circumstance for a worker to reject a place of employment to seek better conditions elsewhere. And the gossip culture within agriculture can damage the recruitment potential of employers as a result.

Where workers remonstrate the employers for poor farm culture, farmers are equally critical of educational establishments for a lack of provision of adequate training to students. Experiential knowledge outweighs universal knowledge as a priority for the employer, a factor which contradicts some farm culture where time constraints prevent such knowledge from being developed. Other local level constraints include the attraction of other industries or the return of children to a farm following an episode away, which can also disrupt farm culture.

Anecdotal assumptions for the domestic shortage of labour blame the general image of farm work on national attitudes and misperceptions, not to be confused with farming as a whole which is, according to Whitehead, Lobley and Baker (2012) experiencing a renaissance. The general image of farm work was revealed as a likely factor deterring new entrants from entering the industry, according to FLC perceptions. Such a claim, however, would need further empirical analysis. But such an observance punctuated descriptions of FLCs' experiences, with teachers and guidance counsellors, whose poor knowledge of what constitutes a career in agriculture, is likely to be partially to blame for fewer entrants over the last generation.

It isn't just 'hard' capacities such as knowledge, skill and training that is likely to affect how farm labour contributors approach the sustainable intensification goals. Emotional connections to other actors in the lifescape also play a part, especially those with the land and local communities. But all actors within the networks can affect knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of farming as a career, from the donning or blocking of capacities at an early age, to the enticement or discouragement of individuals into the labour market, to the development of those capacities later in a careers which can then be exchanged along knowledge networks. Therefore *all* of these enrolled actants mentioned must be taken into consideration by farmers, and policy-makers, for full functionality to occur. This translates further to the pursuit of the sustainability agenda, whereby, a technological solution to a problem might be effectively developed but if any one of the executing agents involved in translating that solution fails, be it through lack

of knowledge, skill, suitability of machinery, worker availability, insufficient communication, or any other such scenario, then the purpose will likely not be met.

Sustainable intensification, according to many respondents and the summation of this research, should be part of a much larger agenda of sustainability (Figure 10.1). In regarding it as such, it then becomes a wicked problem; a problem that is 'difficult to resolve due to contradictory problem definitions, complex or unknown interdependencies, legacies or decisions and investments, and resistance' (Struick et al 2014: 86) as agendas to increase productivity often include labour-reducing devices which then has a knock on effect on all of the other agents within the network. As seen in Figure 10.1, the HCF acts as a bridge which allows the theoretical model to cross over a framework allowing sense to be made of the established networks, and equally to adapt as networks and relationships adapt. As a policy-making tool, HCF can draw on ANT or the lifescape model to understand the effect of actants or actors upon the building and disintegration of capabilities and opportunities and subsequently attempt to influence actants, actors and/or networks in order to increase both the capacities and opportunities available to all FLCs, and increase social and cultural capital available to all members of the labour market, including farmers.

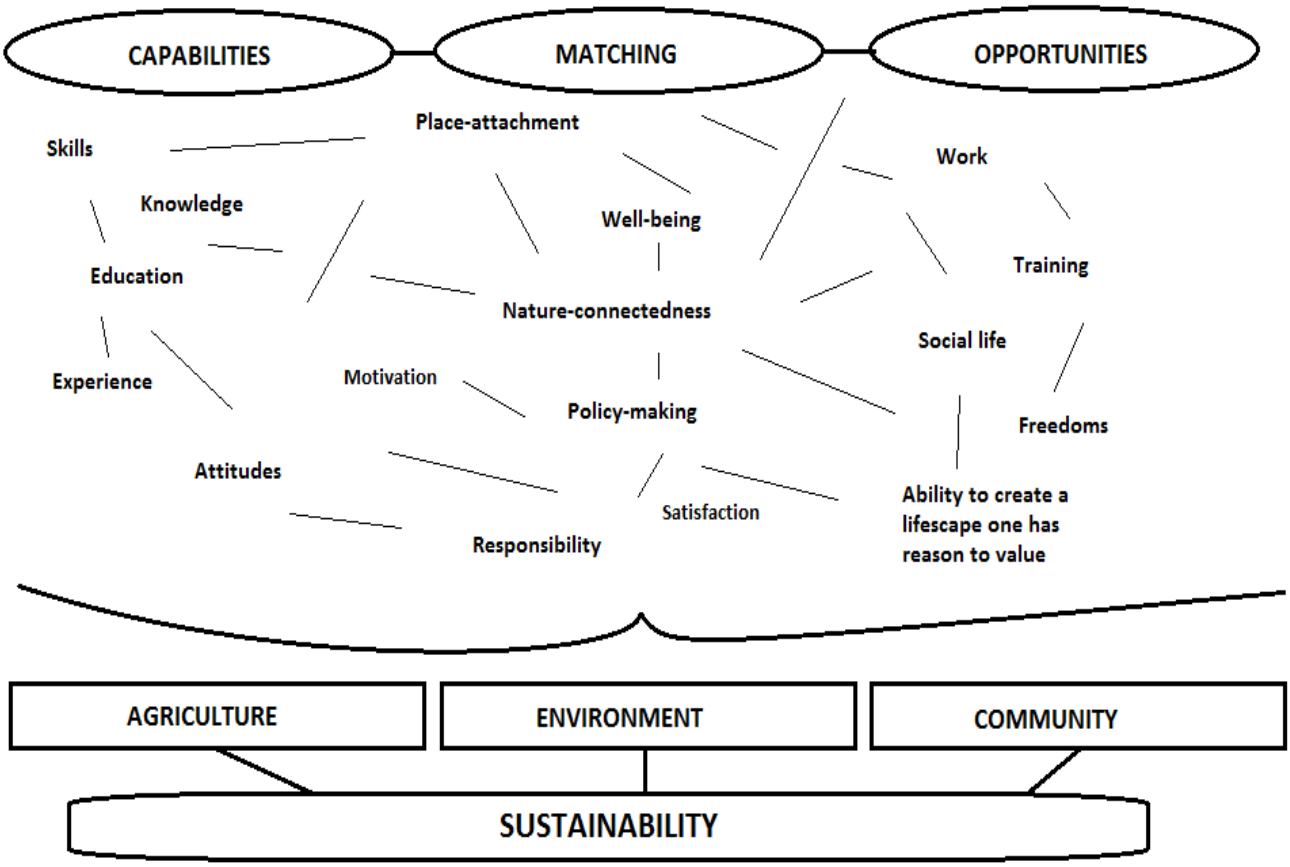

Figure 10.1. The Lifescape of the Farm Labour Contributor within an agenda of sustainability

A Note on Policy

Due to the gap in knowledge regarding the flexible labour force in agriculture and elsewhere, public policy issues regarding this type of worker have been overlooked. Currently, all workers who are not part of the permanent core are vulnerable to less retirement and national insurance benefits, for example. Barley and Kunda (2006) discovered that although, predictably, low-skilled temporary workers were less likely to have retirement plans, this was also true for highly-skilled contractors, pension plans being of particular issue. They discovered that this 'lack was particularly common among younger contractors' (ibid: 60). Such financial insecurity presents a risk that might be worth greater consideration within the realm of agriculture and the wider realm of the gig economy.

Mangum et al (1985) clarify the importance of considering 'how to protect the peripheral worker without whom the protected core would not exist' (ibid: 609). Whilst Barley & Kunda (2006) fear that even though there is recognition that outsourcing and contracting are significant methods of employment moving away from outdated models of the past, 'until we recognise that the nature of employment is changing, we are likely to act with outdated assumptions that will bring unintended, deleterious consequences' (ibid: 62).

Survey data revealed alarmingly low numbers of apprentices employed on farms in the South West, a pattern of employment demonstrable elsewhere in the country. A need exists to not only encourage more farms to take people on as mentors/apprentices but also to train those (and other) farmers in how to improve their on-farm culture in order to encourage staff retention.

Similarly, results suggest that improved collaboration is needed between farmers and colleges to address training needs that are relevant both to regions and their associated farming systems.

10.5 Summing Up

Planes of relationships, attachments and connections span not only across human-human, human-animal (horizontal plane) but also human-land, human-farm, and human-weather (vertical plane). The farm labour contributor belongs to a web of interconnectedness, the greater lifescape of which they are a part. As John Muir (1911) suggests, for those working the land, nothing can be considered separate from the other; the farm worker is tied to farmer, who is tied to the community, which is tied to land and so forth; the connections are total and holistic. However, although ANT proves

a useful tool through which to understand the heterogenous relationships within which the farm worker is enmeshed, any attempt to equalise the importance of all actors within the network would be dishonest, as often the role of human-actors must be recognised as more-than-equal to non-human actants when the lens hovers above such a topic as labour.

The labour market position of the farm worker has improved as a result of the shortage in farm labour, as it is not only the more highly skilled worker that is in demand, but all farm workers, general, seasonal, relief or otherwise. But in order to decrease the fragility of the industry associated with labour shortages, opportunities, capacities and matching need to be examined in detail in order to ensure that;

1. The situation at work is one desirable to the worker and the employer (opportunities and matching)

2. The sociodiversity and strength of rural communities are established in order to ensure sustainability into the future and also to encourage both rural and urban young people into farming spaces outside of specific dates like Open Farm Sunday

3. Those working the land possess the relevant skills, qualities, experience and knowledge to do so effectively in order to negotiate the encroaching challenge of sustainable intensification or otherwise (capacities)

10.6 Limitations of the Study

The empirical evidence that emerges from this thesis is relevant to a small region of Devon and cannot, therefore, be generalised to the rest of the nation. The geographical and agricultural labour situation in Devon is different from other parts of the country where similar studies might induce different results.

The quantity of data resulting from the mixed-methods technique has proved to be immense, therefore numerous themes resulting from the qualitative data that were not directly relevant to the research aims have been omitted and several questions in the original survey design have not been analysed for the same reason. However, these omissions provide potential for further research by the author in the future.

And finally, the use of informants, snowball sampling, and the farmer as a gateway to the farm worker or contractor means that the farm workers or contractors possessing different perspectives, values and relationship dynamics to those that were revealed were unable to add their voice to this discussion. The blockage by two farmers to their employees suggests that other stories are at play in the lifescape of some farm workers in Devon which would clearly be valuable to the overall analysis.

10.7 Recommendations for Future Research

A plethora of ideas for further research have arisen from this study into the farm labour contributor, some of which have been discussed throughout the thesis. Due to such a dearth of quantitative data regarding contractors and qualitative information regarding both contractors and farm workers, a whole new area of study presents itself for rural sociology, the sociology of work, human geography and agricultural economics. A selection of possible research is listed below:

- A larger scale qualitative or quantitative study specifically seeking to understand understandings and perceptions of sustainable intensification belonging to farm workers and/or contractors nationwide, in order to understand where each cohort sees itself as part of the agenda.
- Further empirical studies regarding the career pathways of non-farm successors who desire to continue a career in farming.
- An examination into the socialisation processes of the farm worker in order to further understand the reasons new entrants choose farming as a career that is not related to succession. A severe lack of examination of this factor and how it contributes to the current labour shortage issue faced by the UK as well as Ireland, Australia and New Zealand means that the updating of processes might prevent the attraction of new entrants into the agricultural labour market.
- A stand-alone study into numbers of contractors working in a region and how their lived experience of being an agricultural contractor impedes or assists their wellbeing.
- Participant observational studies examining farm culture on farms in order to further understand capacity and opportunity constraints from the point of view of both the farmer and the farm worker.
- An attitudinal study of young rural potential entrants to farming regarding farming as a career option.

Equally, a similar study to this being carried out in an area of the UK where farm labour composition and agricultural contractor use contrasts differently to the South West would be a useful comparison in order to understand how workers in areas of more intensive farming relate to their local and wider communities, including the land and the environment.

And finally, it was observed that discussions concerning the environment, technologies, sustainable intensification and the future for farm labour contributors did not stimulate a single mention of climate change amongst any one of the respondents. Woods (2011) notes how, in comparison to studies regarding approaches to global warming in rural

populations in less developed countries, ‘far less attention has been devoted to analysing the responsiveness of rural communities in the global north to climate change’ (ibid: 282). This presents another possible avenue for research.

10.8 Concluding remarks

This study makes an original contribution to the understanding of contemporary farm labour contributors and how they interrelate with one another, rural communities, the environment, and the sustainable intensification agenda. This has been achieved through the creation of a space for the voices belonging to an otherwise ignored group of workers, without excluding the farmer and other relevant actants and the effects of their participation or non-participation in the social reproduction process.

Returning finally to the importance of farm workers to the sustainability agenda in terms of 1) as a resource and 2) for social and cultural capital in relation to the farmer, and in considering their relationship with other significant agents within the agricultural landscape, if the farm labour contributor is inextricably linked to one another, the farm, the land, the environment and the community, and their presence and availability remains of vital importance to the future of the industry, then policies regarding sustainable intensification as a paradigm would be foolish to ignore how imperative all of these factors are. There is a need to rebalance how sustainable intensification is perceived so that socio-economic factors are allocated more weight of importance over and above the more technocratic solutions offered. As Noe and Alrøe (2010) so succinctly articulate it:

> The coherence of farms cannot be explored by studying only the elements that are enrolled into the system. The coherence needs to be studied from the perspective of the system or network (ibid: 17)

This research reiterates the need for multidisciplinarity associated with agricultural sustainability research, calling for a mixture of bottom-up and top down approaches to combine knowledges and understandings, as solutions to the sustainable intensification agenda, as shown by this research, must be local-appropriate on multiple levels and not just a one size fits all resolution.

Appendix A. South West Farm Survey

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CONFIDENTIAL

ID: Y103814

The person completing this form should be the farmer or farm manager if possible

1. What is your status in the farm business?
- ☐ Sole proprietor
- ☐ Partner with parent
- ☐ Partner with son/daughter
- ☐ Partner with wife/husband
- ☐ Partner with other relative
- ☐ Partner with non-relative
- ☐ Director/manager
- ☐ Other (*please tell us*) _____

2. Are you …
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to disclose

3. How old are you? _____

4. What is the total area of land that you manage?

	Hectares	Acres
Total Area	_____	_____
Area Owned	_____	_____
Area Rented IN	_____	_____
Area Rented OUT	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

5. Which ***one*** of the following best describes your farm?
☐ Dairy ☐ Cattle/sheep ☐ Arable
☐ Pigs ☐ Poultry ☐ Mixed
☐ Horticulture ☐ Other (*please tell us*)_____

6. Is any of your farm registered organic?
☐ Yes ☐ No

7a. Are you the first generation in your family to be farming in this part of the country?

☐ Yes (if **yes**, go to **Q7c.**) ☐ No (if **no**, go to **Q7b.**)

7b. If **NO**, in roughly what year did your family start farming here? _____ (now go to **Q8.**)

7c. If **YES**, did you or your family previously farm elsewhere in this country?
☐ Yes ☐ No

8. How long have you been responsible for running this farm? _____ years

9. What non-farming enterprises do you operate?
- ☐ Processing and/or retailing of farm produce
- ☐ Tourist accommodation
- ☐ Rents from commercial letting
- ☐ Rents from long term residential letting
- ☐ Shooting
- ☐ Other recreation, (e.g. fishing, nature trails)
- ☐ Agricultural services (e.g. contracting, consultancy)
- ☐ Equine services
- ☐ Forestry
- ☐ Other (*please tell us*) _____
- ☐ None

10. What proportion of your household income is generated from the following sources:

Agriculture on this farm	_____%
Non-farming enterprises on this farm	_____%
Income from off-farm work	_____%
Pensions, savings, investments	_____%
Other (*please tell us*) _____	_____%

11. The average farm business income (total farm gross margin minus fixed costs incurred) for England for **2014/15** financial year was **£39,645**. In comparison to this, was your income … *(tick one)*
- ☐ Considerably lower
- ☐ Similar
- ☐ Somewhat greater
- ☐ Considerably greater
- ☐ Prefer not to say

12. Taking all of your income sources into account, how would you describe the economic prospects for your household over the **NEXT FIVE YEARS**? *(tick one)*
- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Bad
- ☐ Prefer not to say

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1 = Strongly Disagree >> 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Farming is essential to the local community					
Farming is essential to the local economy					
Farming is important in maintaining the local environment					

14. Including yourself and your family, for each of the following types of staff please indicate how many people are typically employed in your business (include all farming *and* non-farming activities):

Directors/managers _____
Other full-time workers _____
Part-time workers (25-47 week/year) _____
Casual worker (<25 weeks/year) _____
Interns/apprentices _____
Volunteers/woofers _____

15a. Do you use contractors?

☐ Yes (if **yes**, go to **Q15b.**) ☐ No (if **no**, go to **Q16.**)

15b. If YES, what for?

16. If you have employees, please tell us how you recruit them (tick all that apply):

☐ Informal contacts ☐ Agency
☐ Advertise locally ☐ Advertise online
☐ Advertise nationally ☐ Other _____
☐ N/A

17. Please list the nationalities of your employees in **2015**:

18. How many of your employees were women in **2015?** _____

19. Over the next year, do you plan to make changes to the amount/type of education/training for your workers?

☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

20. To what extent do you agree with the following

1 = Strongly Disagree >> 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
I can always find seasonal labour when required						
I can always find contractors when required						
I can always find skilled labour when required						

21. Looking at the grid below, for each task carried out on your farm, estimate how much is done by each type of worker in terms of a %, over the course of a year

(e.g. Sowing - Farmer 20%, Contractor 60%, 20% FT worker)

	Farmer	Spouse	Other family	Partner/director	Contractor	FT worker	PT worker	Intern/apprentice	Seasonal worker	Volunteer/woofer
Hedgecutting										
Combining										
Silage making										
Ploughing										
Harvesting										
Sowing										
Drilling										
Fertiliser application										
Pesticide application										
Muck/slurry spreading										
Ditching										
Mowing										
Milking										
Other										

22. Which of the following best describes your labour requirements? *"Changes in technology mean ...."*

☐ I need more labour on my farm
☐ I need just as much labour on my farm
☐ I need less labour on my farm

23. Please indicate whether you currently use or plan to use any of the following technologies in the next 5 years

	Currently use	*Plan to use*
Robotic tractors	☐	☐
Drones	☐	☐
Remote monitoring	☐	☐
GPS auto steer	☐	☐

If you do not use nor plan to use any of these, leave blank and go to **Q25.**

24. Which of the factors influenced your decision to use/plan to use new technology? (*tick all that apply*)

☐ Lack of available labour
☐ High cost of labour
☐ Health reasons for workers/insurance costs
☐ Time-saving reasons
☐ Profitability
☐ Improve efficiency/quality/endurance/productivity
☐ Improve precision and uniformity
☐ Environmental regulation
☐ Other (*please tell us*) _____

25. Are there any particular skills-sets you'd like to see more of in the agricultural workplace, generally?
(*tick all that apply*)

☐ Livestock handling ☐ Computer skills
☐ Machinery operation ☐ Practical experience
☐ Machine maintenance ☐ Shearing
☐ Agronomy ☐ Fencing
☐ Formal post-school agricultural education
☐ Other (*please state*)_____

26. Please describe what it is like being a farmer in 2016

27a. Has your contact with non-farmers changed over the **LAST FIVE YEARS**?

☐ Increased ☐ Stayed the same ☐ Decreased

27b. Why do you say that?

28. How often do you take a holiday?

☐ More than once a year
☐ Once a year
☐ Less often than once a year
☐ Never

29. How satisfied are you with life in general?

☐ Not satisfied at all
☐ Less than satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ More than satisfied
☐ Completely satisfied

30. In comparison to **A YEAR AGO**, would you say you're more or less satisfied with your life?

☐ More satisfied
☐ Less satisfied
☐ About the same

31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1 = Strongly Disagree >> 5 = Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
I feel optimistic					
I feel relaxed					
I deal with problems well					
I feel valued					
I feel what I do is worthwhile					

32. For each of the factors listed in the table, please indicate what kind of influence they have had on your farm's success in **2015** (using the scale):

1 = Very helpful >> 5 = Very damaging/inhibiting

	1	2	3	4	5
CAP					
Pests and diseases					
Input prices					
Weather					
Access to land					
Access to loans					
Access to capital					
Availability of labour					
Affordability of labour					
Family					

33. Please describe the changes you've made to your farm **SINCE 2010**:

a) Change to the size of the farm
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

b) Change to total farm output
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

c) Change to number of livestock
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

d) Change to the amount of employed labour
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

e) Change to the amount of family labour
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

f) Change to the amount of work contracted out
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

g) Change to the level of diversification
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

h) Change to the level of off-farm work
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

j) Change to the amount of environmental management
☐ Increased ☐ Decreased ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

34. Do you expect to retire/semi-retire or leave farming for any other reason in the **NEXT 5 YEARS**?

☐ Yes (if **yes**, go to **Q37.**) ☐ No (if **no**, go to **Q35.**)

35. Over the **NEXT FIVE YEARS**, do you plan to:

a) Change the size of the farm
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

b) Change total farm output
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

c) Change the number of livestock
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

d) Change the amount of employed labour
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

e) Change the level of family labour
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

f) Change to the amount of work contracted out
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

g) Change the level of diversification
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

h) Change the level of off-farm work
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

i) Change amount of environmental management
☐ Increase ☐ Decrease ☐ No Change ☐ N/A

36. Which of the following factors are influencing your plans (*tick all that apply*)

☐ Farm profitability ☐ Cost of inputs
☐ Availability of loans ☐ Market prices
☐ Climate change ☐ Food security
☐ Family changes ☐ Time of life
☐ To make life easier ☐ No factors
☐ Impact of the basic payment scheme
☐ Environmental schemes
☐ Other (*please tell us*) _____

Now go to **Q40a**.

37. What are your main reasons for wishing to retire/semi-retire or leave farming? (*tick all that apply*)

☐ Getting too old
☐ To make way for younger generation
☐ To reduce physical work
☐ Ill health
☐ To reduce stress
☐ To have more time for other interests/holidays
☐ To pursue a different career
☐ Other (*please tell us*) _____

38. If you plan to leave farming to retire/semi retire, at what age do you expect retire or semi-retire? _____

39. Have you discussed your plans to retire with anyone outside of your business? *e.g. accountant/solicitor*

☐ Yes ☐ No

40a. Have you identified a potential successor who will take over the management of the farm business?

☐ No (*go to* **Q40b.**)
☐ Too early to say (*go to* **Q41a.**)
☐ Yes (*go to* **Q41a.**)

40b. If **NO**, what do you expect will eventually happen to your farm? (*please tick* ***ONLY*** *one*)

☐ Inherited by family member(s) & kept in the family but leased out
☐ Inherited by family members and sold
☐ Will be sold as a working farm
☐ Will be sold for non-agricultural purposes
☐ Will be rented out
☐ Other (*please specify*) _____
☐ Don't know

41a. Do you think the interests of British agriculture will be best served by ....

☐ The UK remaining a member of the European Union

☐ The UK withdrawing from the European Union

41b. Please explain your answer

42a. If we were to leave the European Union do you believe that government financial support for agriculture would remain broadly comparable to current levels?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

42b. Please explain your answer

Please use the space on the back of this questionnaire to make any additional comments

Thank you *for completing this questionnaire. If you have any questions please get in contact with the research team on 01392 723359. Please return this questionnaire using the* ***FREEPOST*** *envelope provided.*

☐ Tick here if you want to enter our **prize draw**

Please include an **email address** or **phone no.** here: .....

The winner of a £50 store voucher of their choice will be announced on the **25th April**

NB. These contact details will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw

☐ Tick here if you want to be kept informed of **our work**

Please use this space to make any other comments...

Thank you

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Appendix B. Survey Information Sheet

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South West Farm Survey: Information Sheet

What is the SW farm survey?	The SW farm survey is a survey we have conducted in 2006 and 2010, and are now repeating in 2016. Sent to approximately 4,000 farms across the south west region, the survey covers basic background data on the farm and respondents (e.g. farm size, type, tenure, education, perception of business performance, diversification activities and plans for the future), as well as issues of subjective well-being, and your plans for succession and retirement. By repeating the survey 3 times across the 10 years it will enable us to identify key trends in agriculture in the region.
What has the SW farm survey data been used for?	The information from our previous surveys has proved invaluable and has been used in a wide range of reports and presentations including the following: • *Research to inform the farming help charities: Reanalysis of CRPR SW farm surveys 2005 and 2010 and trends in farm incomes* A report to FCN • *Farming in the South West Uplands* CRPR Research Paper No 33 • *Keeping it in the Family: International Perspectives on Succession and Retirement on Family Farms* Talk to Dartmoor Women in Farming Group • *One day all this will be yours….Or will it?* The Seale-Hayne Succession Seminar • *Farming in the South West uplands: myth and reality* Presentation at The South West Uplands Seminar: A future for our farmed uplands? • Evidence to the Future of Farming Review Chaired by David Fursdon
Who are we?	We are a group of researchers from the Centre for Rural Policy Research, University of Exeter. The survey we are asking you to complete is part of an on-going project we are running.
How is it funded?	The research is funded by a legacy bequeathed by a former member of staff.
What will the data be used for?	Data from the survey will be used to inform a number of Centre for Rural Policy Research projects. Likely outputs from the research include academic journal articles and academic reports and a book on family farming. The results may also be presented at events, including conferences and seminars.
What do I need to do?	The survey should be completed by either the farmer or farm manager if possible. Complete the short survey – it should take around 20 minutes – and send it back to us in the stamped addressed envelope.

For questions about the survey please contact: Dr Hannah Chiswell: Centre for Rural Policy Research, Lazenby House, Prince of Wales Road, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4PJ or (01392) 7233595 or via H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk

For further information about the survey or to raise any concerns, please contact: Professor Matt Lobley: Centre for Rural Policy Research, Lazenby House, Prince of Wales Road, University of Exeter, Exeter, EX4 4PJ or (01392) 724539 or via M.Lobley@exeter.ac.uk

Confidentiality Survey data will be held in confidence and will not be used other than for the purposes described above. Third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by law). Data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act, which means data and hard copies of the survey will be kept securely, indefinitely.

Anonymity Survey data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of names or addresses. The majority of data from the survey will be reduced to numbers with no mention of you or your farm. Where we want to use direct quotes from the open questions, we will use ID tags, e.g. 'Farmer 123' said …' rather than your name or farm name, and any identifiable information you might have mentioned will be removed from the quote.

Consent By completing and returning the survey, you are giving us (the Centre for Rural Policy Research) consent to use the data for the purposes outlined above (see 'What will the data be used for?').

Advice to participants We anticipate that completing the survey will take around 20 minutes. Completing the survey will require you to think about you and your farm (e.g. farm size, type, tenure, education, perception of business performance, diversification activities and plans for the future), as well as your personal well-being, and plans for succession and retirement. You are reminded that you can withdraw at any point at no detriment to yourself. If you wish to withdraw please contact one of the research team named on the previous page.

Benefits of participation By participating in this research you will:

- Get an opportunity to voice your experiences, and highlight any concerns/issues pertaining to your farming situation
- Inform and shape important research about farming in the south west over the last 10 years
- Help researchers understand what is happening to the region's farms and how might be best to support farms

Return the completed survey to us in the envelope provided before the 11th April 2016

Appendix C. Accompanying Letter to Survey

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | LAND, ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMICS AND POLICY INSTITUTE

Lazenby House
Prince of Wales Road
Exeter
EX4 4PJ

t +44 (0) 1392 722438
e crprmail@exeter.ac.uk
w www.exeter.ac.uk/crpr
Y101151

14th March 2016

Dear *Respondent*,

Centre for Rural Policy Research South West Farm Survey

On two previous occasions (2006 & 2010) the Centre for Rural Policy Research (CRPR) has undertaken a major survey of farmers in the South West. In the past we have covered topics such as succession, the impact of CAP reform, plans for the future and responses to food security concerns. The information gathered through the survey has been widely used in reports for the South West Uplands Federation, the Farming Help Charities, County Councils, Devon Wildlife Trust and others.

Agriculture is facing numerous challenges including low and volatile prices, extreme weather, disease threats and so on. Added to this, whatever decision is reached regarding our membership of the European Union, will have repercussions for years to come. This is all the more important within the South West where agriculture plays such an important role in the local economy and the actions of farmers help shape the landscape and environmental value of the region.

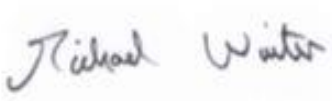
Against this background the CRPR is continuing to undertake research into agriculture in the South West and is now undertaking a third survey which will give us data on a decade of changes. The enclosed questionnaire is designed to collect information to help produce an accurate picture of the current state of farming and how it may change in the near future. In particular, we are interested in labour use on farms, the well-being of farmers and as well as the implications of UK withdrawing from the European Union. We hope that you will be prepared to help in a project that seeks to give a voice to farmers at a time when the industry faces new challenges. The information collected will be of use to policy makers and local and regional organisations with an interest in agriculture, food and land management.

Your name has been selected either because you have participated in past surveys, or as part of a random sample of farmers within South West England. Whilst co-operation in the survey is voluntary, we would be very grateful if you are able to take part. The survey should not take more than 20 minutes and as recognition of the good support from yourself and the SW farming community, we are offering a prize draw of £50 voucher for a store of your choice. The draw will be made on 25th April 2016.

The information you provide will be handled in the strictest confidence, your details will not be passed to any other organisation and no individual farm or persons will be identifiable in the survey results. We hope you will help us build an accurate picture of the state of farming in the region by completing the survey and returning it in the enclosed **FREEPOST** envelope by **11th April 2016**. If you have any queries, please contact Dr Hannah Chiswell on 01392 723359 (H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk). If you would prefer to complete the questionnaire online please go to: https://exeter.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/swfarmsurvey16 or use the link to the survey on our homepage (as above).

With many thanks for your time,

Yours sincerely



Professor Michael Winter OBE
Director Centre for Rural Policy Research

Professor Matt Lobley

Director, Centre for Rural Policy Research

Appendix D. A Comparison of Survey and Defra Data

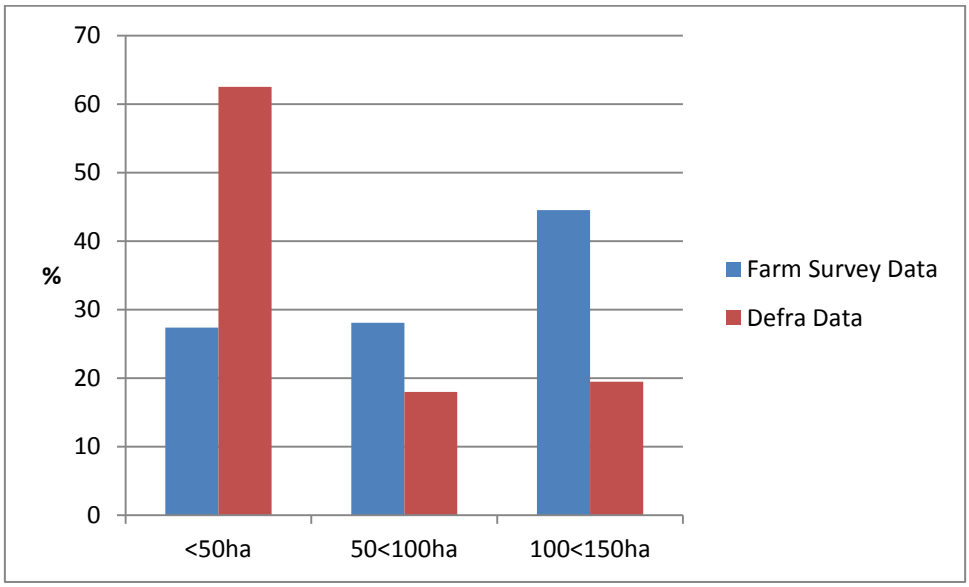


Figure A. Comparison of farms surveyed according to size

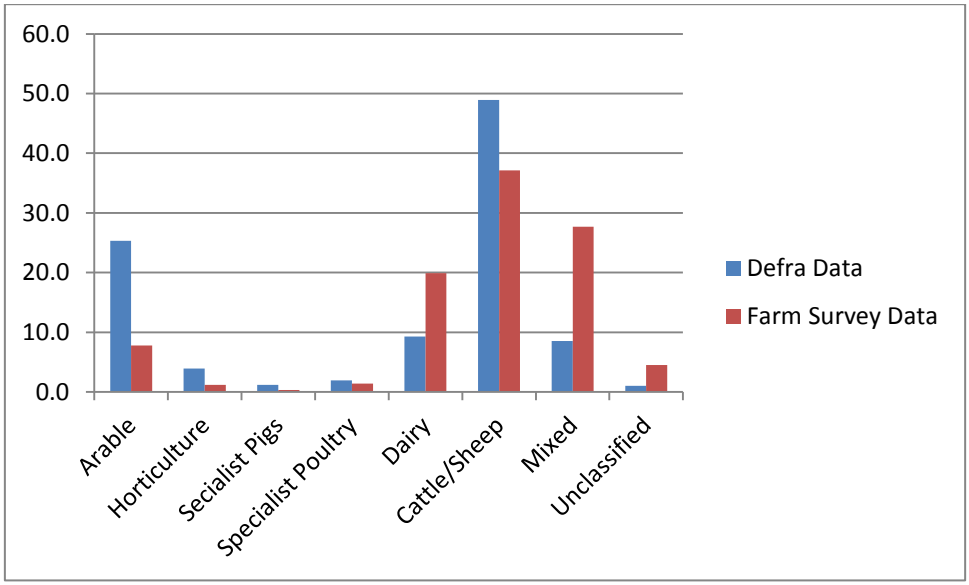


Figure B. Comparison of farms surveyed according to type

Appendix E. Interview Prompts

Farmers

General Farm Information

- Acreage of the holding
- Farm Type
- Type of tenure

Questions regarding the Farmer and their family

- Place and year of birth
- Average hours worked per week
- Any other work, including contracting?
- Education and if agriculture or non-agriculture-related
- Background – Farming or non-farming
- Relationship status
- Children - and how likely would they be to recommend farming to their children?
- Family members working on farm
- Most and least enjoyable things about farm work
- With the option to start over, would farming still be the chosen career path?

Labour composition

- Informal labour sharing – eg neighbours. Paid or unpaid?
- Types, numbers and nationalities of workers
- Tasks performed by each cohort
- Discussion regarding skills belonging to each cohort
- Benefits of different types of worker
- Changes in labour composition over time
- Missing Skill Sets
- On-farm interactions with workers
- Recruitment of labour
- Details on sickness, absenteeism and quitting rates of staff

Contractors

- If used, what for, and whether for skill sets, machinery or both
- Recruitment of contractors

Availability and qualities of workers

- Ease of finding skilled, seasonal or contract labour
- Preferred qualities in different types of worker
- Aptitude or attitude?
- Importance of formal qualifications
- Perceptions of local and universal types of knowledge
- Future intentions for education or training of staff

Labour availability

- Prompts for more info if shortages mentioned/agreed with
- Possible reasons for current labour shortage
- Possible interventions/strategies that might be employed to prevent or cure the crisis

Technology

- Current usage of technology; robotic tractors, drones, remote monitoring, GPS auto-steer
- Effect of changes in technology use on labour
- Perceptions of changes in agricultural technology and the effects of this on the environment

Relationships - Horizontal

- Discussion regarding relationship between farmer and each different cohort or worker they employ – length of time, friendships, social interaction etc
- The most marked differences or similarities between these relationships
- Perceptions of each worker attitude towards the farm/land/work performed
- Team or family analogy most applicable to the labour situation

Relationships – Vertical (Place, land and nature)

- Farm, environment connection
- Feelings of environmental responsibility
- Engagement in pro-environmental activities on or off farm

- Perceptions of how changes in labour patterns might have affected the landscape
- Understandings of the term ‘sustainable intensification’

Relationships - Community

- Discussions regarding the local community, general perception of it, personal played within it, sense of responsibility towards it
- Attitude towards newcomers

General

- Main problems/issues regarding labour on the holding
- Ideas around what the key to a happy workforce is
- Back-up/succession plans in case of significant farm worker or contributor falling ill, dying, leaving
- Possible discussions around wages, the scrapping of the AWB, unions and unionisation
- Perceptions regarding the future of labour in agriculture

Farm Workers

General Worker Information

- Job title and role
- Type of worker (Full-time, part-time, apprentice etc)
- Description of typical day at work

Questions regarding the Farm Worker and their family

- Place and year of birth
- Average hours worked per week
- Any other work, including contracting?
- Education and if agriculture or non-agriculture-related
- Background – Farming or non-farming
- Relationship status
- Children – and how likely would they be to recommend farming to their children?
- Their personal pathway to a career in farming
- With the option to start over, would farming still be the chosen career path?

- Most and least enjoyable things about farm work

Job satisfaction

- Satisfaction with present job, what would they change?
- With the option to start over, would farming still be the chosen career path?
- Discussion regarding thoughts of leaving and whether they have ever been acted upon ,why this was the case, and question how they would go about looking for a new job
- Discussions regarding education and training offered at the place of work and levels of satisfaction with this
- Reasons for taking the job
- Perceptions regarding career prospects
- Discuss reasons for taking the job originally
- Discuss whether they feel valued, whether they feel their health and safety is important, whether they are treated with respect and courtesy, and how they perceive themselves with regards to replaceability
- Discuss feelings towards job security

Living arrangements

- Tied accommodation provided with the job or not? – If so, probe for more details
- If not, what are the living arrangements? (Owner, rented, living with parents etc)
- Request home postcode and ask about travelling distances and means of transport

Labour availability

- Prompts for more info if shortages mentioned/agreed with
- Possible reasons for current labour shortage
- Possible interventions/strategies that might be employed to prevent or cure the crisis

Technology

- Current usage of technology; robotic tractors, drones, remote monitoring, GPS auto-steer
- Effect of changes in technology use on labour
- Perceptions of changes in agricultural technology and the effects of this on the environment

Relationships - Horizontal

- Discussion regarding relationship between farm worker and each other different cohort in the study – length of time, friendships, social interaction etc
- The most marked differences or similarities between these relationships
- Perceptions of each worker attitude towards the farm/land/work performed
- Comparisons between themselves and contractors in terms of pay, work-life balance and benefits
- Team or family analogy most applicable to the labour situation

Relationships – Vertical (Place, land and nature)

- Farm, environment connection
- Would it be more difficult to leave the farm, the people, the place or the community?
- Feelings of environmental responsibility
- Engagement in pro-environmental activities on or off farm
- Perceptions of how changes in labour patterns might have affected the landscape
- Understandings of the term ‘sustainable intensification’

Relationships - Community

- Discussions regarding the local community, general perception of it, personal played within it, sense of responsibility towards it
- Attitude towards newcomers
- Question how they feel they are perceived by local and wider community

General

- Main problems/issues regarding labour on the holding
- Ideas around what the key to a happy workforce is
- Possible discussions around wages, the scrapping of the AWB, unions and unionisation
- Perceptions regarding the future of labour in agriculture
- Future aspirations and likelihood of achieving them

Contractors

General Worker Information

- Job title and role
- Employed or self-employed?
- Full or part-time contractor
- Description of typical day at work

Questions regarding the contractor and their family

- Place and year of birth
- Average hours worked per week
- Any other work, including contracting?
- Education and if agriculture or non-agriculture-related
- Background – Farming or non-farming
- Relationship status
- Children - and how likely would they be to recommend farming to their children?
- Their personal pathway to a career in contracting
- Most and least enjoyable things about farm work
- Experience of being a farmer/farm worker?
- With the option to start over, would farming still be the chosen career path?

Job satisfaction

- Satisfaction with present job, what would they change?
- With the option to start over, would farming still be the chosen career path?
- Discussion regarding thoughts of leaving and whether they have ever been acted upon ,why this was the case, and question how they would go about looking for a new job
- Discussions regarding education and training available at the place of work and levels of satisfaction with this
- Reasons for taking the job/setting up the business
- Perceptions regarding career prospects
- If employed - discuss whether they feel valued, whether they feel their health and safety is important, whether they are treated with respect and

courtesy, and how they perceive themselves with regards to replaceability

- Discuss feelings towards job security

Living arrangements

- What are their living arrangements? (Owner, rented, living with parents etc)
- Request home postcode and ask about travelling distances to customer base. How many miles would they be willing to travel for a contract?

Labour availability

- Prompts for more info if shortages mentioned/agreed with
- Possible reasons for current labour shortage
- Possible interventions/strategies that might be employed to prevent or cure the crisis

Technology

- Current usage of technology; robotic tractors, drones, remote monitoring, GPS auto-steer
- Effect of changes in technology use on labour
- Perceptions of changes in agricultural technology and the effects of this on the environment

Relationships - Horizontal

- Discussion regarding relationship between contractor and each other different cohort in the study – length of time, friendships, social interaction etc
- The most marked differences or similarities between these relationships
- Perceptions of each worker attitude towards the farm/land/work performed
- Comparisons between themselves and farm workers in terms of pay, work-life balance and benefits
-

Relationships – Vertical (Place, land and nature)

- Farm, environment connection
- Would it be more difficult to leave the farm, the people, the place or the community?
- Feelings of environmental responsibility

- Engagement in pro-environmental activities on or off farm
- Perceptions of how changes in labour patterns might have affected the landscape
- Understandings of the term ‘sustainable intensification’

Relationships - Community

- Discussions regarding the local community, general perception of it, personal played within it, sense of responsibility towards it
- Attitude towards newcomers
- Question how they feel they are perceived by local and wider community

General

- Is speed or efficiency most important to them in completing a contract?
- How has demand/technology/the life of a contractor changed over the last five/ten/twenty years?
- Probe with regards to competition
- Ideas around what the key to a happy workforce is
- Possible discussions around wages, the scrapping of the AWB, unions and unionisation
- Perceptions regarding the future of labour in agriculture
- Future aspirations and likelihood of achieving them

Appendix F. Participant Request Form

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | LAND, ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMICS AND POLICY INSTITUTE

Lazenby House
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Exeter EX4 4PJ

T: +44 (0) 7800867205
E: cn293@exeter.ac.uk
W: www.exeter.ac.uk/leep

4th March 2016

Research Participation Request

I am a PhD researcher based in the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute (LEEP) at the University of Exeter. I am investigating agricultural labour in the UK, from the perspective of both the farmer and the farmworker, and I am writing in the hope that you might like to take part. In the 1970s a significant piece of research was carried out by a man called Howard Newby (1977) on farm workers and their situation both in the workplace and the wider community. There have been many changes and transitions in farm labour since then, and I aim to carry out a similar piece of research on the current state of farm labour in Devon in order to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the current labour situation in Britain.

Part of the research will involve interviewing farmers and as many people as possible who provide labour on their farm. These could include any of the below:

- Family members who contribute to farm work
- Full and part-time hired labour
- Casual/seasonal workers
- Apprentices
- External contractors
- Anybody else who might work on the farm at any time over the period of the year.

I'm sure you're very busy so would of course arrange dates and times around your schedule.

If you would like to know a little bit more about what being involved in the research would entail or just want to know a bit more about what I am doing, feel free to contact me using my details below.

Many thanks,

Caroline Nye

Land, Environment, Economic and Policy Institute

Appendix G. Farm Pen Portraits

ID	Farm Size	Farm Type	Labour composition
Farm 1	450-500 acres	Traditional Mixed Farm - Livestock, dairy and arable	1 Farmer, 2 full time workers, 1 part-time worker, 3 contractors
Farm 2	200-250 acres	Mixed	1 farmer, 1 full-time worker, 2 part-time workers, various volunteers, 2 contractors
Farm 3	1,000 - 1,5000 acres	Diary and arable	8 full time workers, 1 part time worker, 1 seasonal worker, 2 contractors
Farm 4	400-500 acres	Mixed	2 Farmers, 2 full-time workers, 1 part-time worker, , 3 contractors
Farm 5	150-200 acres	Dairy	Farmer, some family (farmer's father), 1 contractor
Farm 6	300-350 acres	Livestock	1 full-time farm worker, 2 contractors
Farm 7	250-300 acres	Dairy, arable and beef	1 Farmer, 2 part-time workers and 1 apprentice, 1 contractor
Farm 8	500-550 acres	Arable and sheep	1 full-time worker (farmer's son), some family (farmer), one contractor
Farm 9	2,500 - 3,000 acres	Mixed - arable and livestock	2 farmers, 3 full-time workers, 2 part-time workers, two casual, no contractors

Farm 10	350-400 acres	Dairy	2 farmers, one full-time worker, one part-time worker. One contractor.
Farm 11	350-400 acres	Mixed - livestock	1 Farmer, 1 full-time worker, 1 part-time worker, 2 casual workers, 3 contractors
Farm 12	200-250 acres	Mixed - Sheep, arable, woodland	1 Farmer, 3 contractors
Farm 13	50-100 acres	Livestock, geese and chickens	1 Farmer, varying number of volunteers, 2 contractors
Farm 14	1000-1500 acres	Livestock	2 farmers, 1 full-time worker, part-time worker. 3 contractors, varying number of casual (students), 4 contractors
Farm 15	450-500 acres	Diary and geese	3 farmers, 1 part-time worker, 2 contractors
Farm 16	2000-25000 acres	Dairy	2 farmers, 4 full-time workers, 2 part-time workers, 3 contractors
Farm 17	1,500 - 2,000 acres	Livestock	2 Farmers, 1 apprentice, 2 full time workers, 1 part-time worker, some summer casual and some vet students casual, 3 contractors

Appendix H. Certificate of ethical approval

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Amory Building
Rennes Drive
Exeter UK EX4 4RJ

www.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

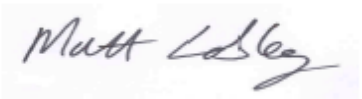
Academic Unit:	Centre for Rural Policy Research, Politics
Title of Project:	The 'Blind Spot' of Agricultural Research: A Mixed-Methods Consideration of Agricultural Labour in South West England: Past, Present and Future
Research Team Member(s):	Caroline Nye
Project Contact Point:	cn293@exeter.ac.uk
Supervisors:	Matt Lobley, Michael Winter

This project has been approved for the period

From: 23rd March 2016
To: 31st January 2017

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201516-030

Signature: Date: 22nd March 2016

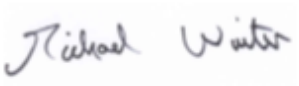


(Matt Lobley, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)

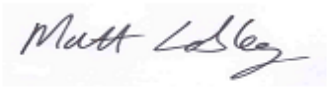
The information you provide will be handled in the strictest confidence, your details will not be passed to any other organisation and no individual farm or persons will be identifiable in the survey results. We hope you will help us build an accurate picture of the state of farming in the region by completing the survey and returning it in the enclosed **FREEPOST** envelope by **11th April 2016**. If you have any queries, please contact Dr Hannah Chiswell on 01392 723359 (H.M.Chiswell@exeter.ac.uk). If you would prefer to complete the questionnaire online please go to: https://exeter.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/swfarmsurvey16 or use the link to the survey on our homepage (as above).

With many thanks for your time,

Yours sincerely



Professor Michael Winter OBE
Director Centre for Rural Policy Research



Professor Matt Lobley

Director, Centre for Rural Policy Research

Appendix I. Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Research

Title of Research Project

The 'Blind Spot' of Agricultural Research: A Mixed-Methods Consideration of Agricultural Labour in South West England: Past, Present and Future

Details of Project

What is the research about?	This research will examine the premise that self-employed contractors and intermittent farm workers are on the increase within UK agriculture, whilst traditional workers are on the decline. The proposed research aims to understand who is today's farm worker, how and why the composition of farm labour has changed over the last 50 years, and what the implications of these changes are for farmers, the land, and rural communities. By examining the strengths and weaknesses of the current agricultural labour situation, the researcher hopes to consider how best the industry might be equipped with a highly skilled workforce going forward.
Who am I?	My name is Caroline Nye, I am a PhD researcher based at the Centre for Rural Policy Research at the University of Exeter.
Who is funding the research?	This research is funded by the John Oldacre Foundation; a charity which provides financial support for the advancement or promotion, for the public benefit, of research and education in agricultural sciences and the publication of the useful results.
What will the data be used for?	The interest of this research is purely academic and the results will be used for academic purposes only.

Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview or observation data, please contact: Caroline Nye, Centre for Rural Policy Research, Room G.03, Lazenby House, St Germans Road, University of Exeter, Devon, UK EX4 4PJ

Phone: 07800867205

Email: cn293@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Professor Michael Winter: D.M.Winter@exeter.ac.uk or Professor Matt Lobley: M.Lobley@exeter.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below).Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act, which means that data will be anonymised and kept securely, indefinitely. The researcher will not pass any details on to a third party unless anything is disclosed by the respondent

pertaining to offences under prevention of terrorism legislation (disclosures now covered by Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989).

Anonymity
Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of names or addresses. You and the farm you own/provide labour for will be referred to using a random ID 'tag' e.g. 'farmer1' or 'farmworker2'. It is important to be aware however, that the research focus on the farm or local area could mean that a unique characteristic could make you recognisable to others who know the farm/area well: although data will be reduced or changed to conceal your identity.

Consent
I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.
I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form;
- all information I give will be treated as confidential;
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

.....	.....
(Signature of participant)	(Date)
……	……
(Printed name of participant)	(Email address of participant if they have requested to view a copy of the interview transcript.)
.....	.....
(Signature of researcher)	(Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).
Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

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